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Shadow- Go Mad!

by Maxwell Grant

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SHADOW—GO MADI

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1

The Pantheon Theater is on Forty-ninth Street in New York City. It is a normal legitimate theater where the great actors perform on a lighted stage. This night the play was Shakespeare's Macbeth, the actor was the great Patrick McBride. It was the 112th night of the successful run, the third time in his career that McBride had performed Macbeth to the cheers of the critics and the attentive silence of the audience.

McBride had outdone himself this night, the audience as silent and motionless as if paralyzed as the play drew to its tragic end. There was a slight movement, a readiness to cheer the great actor, as the end approached. MacBeth, beaten but still undefeated, faced MacDuff for the final fight.

"Lay on MacDuff, and damned be he who first cries 'Hold, enough!'"

The defiant words echoed through the theater.

Patrick McBride, proud and strong as MacBeth, drew his sword and faced the actor playing MacDuff.

The actor playing MacDuff attacked. The two actors crossed swords and parried for some seconds. The audience, fascinated, watched the carefully rehearsed fight. Both actors fought and parried ferociously with their carefully blunted and edgeless weapons.

Then, without warning, the actor playing MacDuff suddenly seemed to stiffen, to brush his eyes, and, with no hesitation, drew his dagger, stepped to Patrick McBride, and stabbed him to death as the audience began to scream.

The giant Soviet jet touched down at London Airport. The knot of welcoming diplomats and members of Govern-

ment stepped through the drizzle of rain toward where the giant plane would taxi to a stop.

The roaring of the jet engines grew louder.

The London Police kept back the small crowd that had come to see the Soviet diplomats arrive. Beyond the first knot of curious a ragged group of marchers circled in the rain, their anti-Communist placards raised high. The circling marchers chanted as they marched and watched the great jet taxi slowly toward the small group of British officials out on the landing area.

The reporters lounged behind the first barricade, making jokes among each other, half-awake and idly watching as the jet came to a stop. They had been through it all so many times before. Even the Soviet diplomats were the same old men—Valery Bukharin, First Deputy Premier; Ivan Bunarov, Deputy Foreign Minister; and Georgi Kutusov, Military Attache at the Embassy in London.

Bukharin, as befitted his rank, was the first to emerge from the interior of the giant jet. Behind Bukharin, Kutusov and Bunarov stood side by side. (The reporters began to write—it looked as if Kutusov was moving up, or Bunarov was moving down in rank, or the Deputy Foreign Minister would have preceded the Military Attache.)

The British officials, looking at each other because they, too, had noted the probable shift in rank, stepped forward wreathed in smiles intended to be friendly. The police stood alert. The chanting marchers raised their voices and placards so that the Russians would see and hear. The police firmly held them back.

Bukharin, a tall man, began to descend the landing stairs, followed by both Bunarov and Kutusov. The Deputy Premier reached the bottom, smiled broadly, and extended his hand toward the chief British official who hurried to meet him.

Georgi Kutusov, standing one step above the Deputy Premier, reached inside his coat, drew out a small pistol, and shot the Deputy Premier in the back of the head.

Bukharin pitched forward into the wet landing area.

Kutusov turned and shot Bunarov.

When the police overpowered the Military Attache he was smiling broadly and his eyes were vacant, trancelike.

It was a clear night in the city of San Francisco when a young man named Walter Stock stopped on his way home from a visit with friends to look out over the magnificent Bay and the lights of the city spread out below where he stood high on one of the many hills. Walter admired his city. He enjoyed the clear air and the hills.

He stood there about a half an hour, looking at the city, then he boarded a cable car to ride down the hill toward another cable car that would take him up another hill to a spot near his home. He had been on the car about ten minutes, it was halfway down the hill, when the car had to slow as it crossed one of the flat cross streets.

Just before the car started its steep plunge down the next slope, Walter Stock pushed a woman down, grabbed her purse, leaped from the car, and ran away along the cross street.

The police caught him twenty minutes later hiding in a dark doorway. He had the purse in his hand. The purse was of no value. There was \$12.65 inside the purse, there was nothing else of any value at all. Walter Stock earned \$150 a week, and had no family or dependents.

Walter Stock did not drink much, there was no record of his ever gambling, he was not a drug addict, he was keeping no women. He had no criminal record, had never been in trouble, and had \$9,725 in his savings account.

He had never seen or known the woman he attacked before.

She did not know him.

Walter was smiling when he was caught. He stumbled as he was led away by the police, as if sleepwalking.

On a country road in Southern France an armored truck stopped when it found a large tree blocking the road. The guards were very cautious. Two got out to try to shift the tree, the other two, including the driver, sat inside the truck, alert, their weapons ready.

The two guards outside the truck managed to shift the tree. Nothing happened. The two guards studied the surrounding area. They saw nothing but a party of teenage boys and girls having a picnic in the field that bordered the road.

The two guards returned to the truck. The inside guard opened the door to let them in.

The mortar shell exploded exactly behind the guards about to reenter the truck.

Flame and black smoke.

The two outside guards fell to the ground.

The guard inside began to choke as a gas spread into the truck.

From the field beside the road the picnicking boys and girls poured across the road to the truck. The driver was shot in his cab. The two guards on the ground were shot where they lay by the vicious teenagers. The guard inside was dragged out and shot. The teenagers climbed into the truck, wearing gas masks, and the truck drove away.

One guard did not die. "They were all laughing!" The one guard said when he could talk. "Their eyes! It was their eyes. Like crazy animals!"

The police found the truck two days later, abandoned fifty miles away. All the money was still in the truck.

The squad of Special Forces soldiers of the United States Army surrounded the cave on the uplands of Viet Nam. Their green berets flashed as they moved swiftly in for the final kill of the unit of Viet Cong hiding inside the cave. Their officer hissed his sharp orders. The soldiers went forward without words or hesitation.

They moved into position, their stern faces set in ruthless lines. Four men ran forward and lobbed tear gas grenades into the cave and dove for cover. Moments later a ragged group of the Viet Cong enemy came bursting out of the cave ready to fight. The green berets raised their weapons, their lips set in grim lines. The Viet Cong scrambled for some cover.

But there was no real cover.

The Viet Cong soldiers had no chance, they could only die.

Until, suddenly, the American green beret unit stood up as a man and surrendered.

The Brandenburg Gate splits Berlin into East and West. It is a favorite place to visit for foreign dignitaries. On this day, the foreign visitor was the Prince of an Arab nation. He stood in his flowing burnoose and dutifully admired the gate, deplored the split of the city, and complimented the West Berlin officials on the great work they had done with their half of the divided city.

The blond young man stood at the edge of the small crowd of onlookers attracted by the strange robes of the Prince. He was undistinguished, no different from a thousand other blond youths in Berlin. He watched the dark Prince for some time, admiring the flowing robes trimmed with gold. He talked easily to other curious watchers who stood on either side of him. He seemed, people said later, to admire the Prince. His eyes shined as if he could see far-off and exotic lands.

No one noticed the change. No one saw the blond young man seem to stiffen, brush his hand across his eyes, turn and look around as if searching for someone or something—or as if he was wondering where he was and how he had gotten here.

No one saw the change as he looked again at the dark Prince.

No one saw the blond young man walk straight to a stocky stranger standing a few feet away, reach into the stranger's pocket, and draw out a Luger—a long-barreled Luger.

Everyone in front of the Brandenburg Gate saw what happened next. They saw the blond young man step quickly out from the crowd, fire three quick shots straight at the Prince. They saw the Prince fall. They saw the German officials and the police guard begin to shout. They saw the bodyguards of the Prince run to him, whirl with their weapons ready.

Later, no one could remember what had happened to the blond young man. In the confusion, the wild melee

that followed the shooting of the Prince, the young man vanished. No one saw him go—or almost no one.

One man did see the young man fire, and instantly turn and blend into the crowd. This man saw the blond youth drop the pistol, move slowly but steadily into the crowd and through it and out across the open space into a building. The man followed, and as he did he bent over a ring on his finger and seemed to speak into it. The man spoke urgently for a few seconds, and then followed the young man closely but unseen.

The blond young man went through the building and down into the cellar. He crossed the cellar and went through a break in the wall, still there from the destruction of the war, into the cellar of another building. He went up a flight of stairs into the interior of the second building. He left the second building and went out into the street.

The blond youth walked a few blocks and caught a taxicab. His shadower hailed another cab and followed. The chase went on through the city, the blond youth in the first taxi obviously unaware that he was being followed. He had not looked back once, but had stared straight ahead as he made his escape.

At last the taxi stopped on a shabby street in one of the poorer sections of Berlin. Here the evidence of a lost war and of the madness of Hitler in destroying his city with him, was still visible. The blond youth, who had certainly not been born when the city died, or, perhaps, had been born in those very days of flaming apocalypse, paid the taxi driver and walked calmly into an old building still showing the cracks and scars of war.

He still did not notice the man following him so carefully. Not even when the man followed into the building and up the stairs far enough to see the youth enter a room on the third floor. The man turned back and descended the stairs. In the silent downstairs hallway the man bent again over his ring. Then he quickly left the building and walked away.

The street was silent and deserted.

Some half an hour later, twilight began to settle over Berlin. In his room on the third floor the young man sat in a straight chair, his hands on his knees, as rigid

as a statue. He had not moved since he came into the room. He stared toward the window but he did not see anything. He did not hear the faint sound.

It was a sound like the light swish of a wind. It came from a dark part of the room near the door. Even if the blond youth could have heard, and looked, he would have seen nothing—only a darker darkness, a form, a shapeless shape that seemed to hover. As if the dark itself had thickened and come alive. As if the shadows themselves had taken on form, heaviness.

For some moments that was all that happened—a sudden sense that something more was in the dingy room of the Berlin tenement.

Then, in the dark corner, there were two glowing eyes, the faint red glow of some eerie light. The eyes stared unblinking at the blond youth in the chair. The eyes burned in the dark twilight room where no light had been turned on. The blond youth did not move.

The glowing eyes moved, came closer to the youth, and the great black shape emerged from its covering shadows. A tall, black shrouded figure that seemed to blend into the dark itself. A wide-brimmed black slouch hat shaded and hid all but the burning eyes, the long hawk nose that cut the air like a scythe. A long hand reached out, and a blood-red gem glowed on one of the long fingers. The hand with the glowing ring touched the rigid blond youth.

As if the hand contained some power of its own, the youth moved for the first time, turned, his eyes gazing at the macabre figure before him.

The blond young man stared at The Shadow.

The Shadow's eerie laugh filled the small, dark room.

The young man smiled.

The chilling laugh shivered through the room. The eyes of The Shadow burned into the face of the young man. The great black shape loomed like some avenging monster.

But the young man only smiled.

2

THE BURNING eyes of The Shadow studied the face of the blond youth who had killed the Prince.

The eyes were flat, vacant. Trancelike eyes and yet somehow smiling. The lips of the blond youth were smiling as if he saw something funny, amusing. But the youth was seeing nothing. Vacant eyes, and yet beneath the flat surface of the blue eyes there was something wild, something animal like. The youth still sat rigid. Only his head moved, turned to look at The Shadow.

But the eyes of the youth did not see The Shadow.

As he stared down at the young man The Shadow realized that the blond youth was seeing nothing at all. No . . . that was not exactly it. The mind of The Shadow reached into the mind of the youth who sat there in the strange trance. The eyes of the young man flickered, he moved in his seat, as the power of The Shadow entered his mind like the probing of long fingers.

The Shadow realized that the young man could see, was seeing, but not what was in front of him. The young man did not see what was in the dark room. It was something else, something pleasant to the young man. Not an imagined scene, an actual scene. The young man thought he was somewhere else, looking at some other scene in some other place. For all practical purposes, the young man *was* somewhere else, seeing something else.

Yet the young man had come directly home—by a devious route as if he had had an escape planned. But without looking back, walking in a trance according to the agent of The Shadow who had made his report over his secret ring radio. Something was very unusual. The young man had shot the Prince, made a careful escape, and come straight to his own room—and yet did not know where he was!

The blazing eyes of the shrouded black figure glowed

stronger in the dark room of the Berlin slum. His powers, learned so long ago in the Orient from the great Master Chen T'a Tze, probed into the mind of the young man, clouded the youth's mind until the young man had no more will, no more awareness of anything but the thick fog that permeated him and made him want to tell all he knew to this weird black figure. The youth moved, rubbed his eyes, shifted in his seat and slowly relaxed, no longer rigid. The powerful voice of The Shadow filled the dark room.

"Why did you kill the Prince?"

The young man blinked, saw the looming shape. "Who . . . are . . . you? What . . ."

"Why did you shoot the Prince?"

The youth shook his head as if to clear the fog from his mind. He stared puzzled at The Shadow whose eyes glowed above him. The young man looked at the glowing girasol ring on the finger of The Shadow.

"What . . . do you . . ." and the boy stopped, shook his head "Shoot? I . . . shot . . . no one. No, I shot no one!"

"You used your Luger," The Shadow intoned, guiding the mind that was in his power now.

"Luger? I have no Luger! I own no gun!"

The Shadow tightened his power on the mind of the young man. He saw the youth twist in his seat as if in pain. The voice of The Shadow was relentless.

"I am The Shadow! You cannot resist me. I avenge all evil acts. Why did you shoot the Prince?!"

The youth blinked again. "Prince?" And, suddenly, the youth smiled, brushed back his blond hair, his eyes eager and excited as if seeing a vision. But it was not a vision. The young man leaned forward in his chair, his eyes watching something in front of him that excited him "Isn't he magnificent? A Prince! Think of it, a real Arab Prince and I'm watching him. Look! Look at the way he smiles!"

The young man leaned forward, strained as if seeing over the heads of people in front of him. The Shadow watched the young man, his piercing eyes glowing in the dark room. He watched the young man carefully.

"You admire the Prince?"

"Of course!" the young man said eagerly. "Look at him! The power, so regal. There is a leader, a ruler! Do you know what he did to become Prince?"

"Tell me," The Shadow intoned, watching.

"He fought a ten year Holy War. He came out of the desert and defeated all of them! Strong, you see? A strong man! A true leader."

The power of The Shadow probed deep into the mind of the young man before him. But the youth said nothing more—only leaned in his chair as if staring still at the Prince at the Brandenburg Gate, talked of the Prince, admired the Prince as if he could see the regal figure in its flowing gold-and-white burnoose still in front of him. He looked up at The Shadow without a trace of fear or surprise. He seemed to be asking if The Shadow, too, could see the Prince there in front of The Brandenburg Gate.

"What is your name." The Shadow said, gently now because he knew that there was no use trying to learn more from the young man.

"Kurt Pieper," the young man said promptly. "I wish I could stay here and watch the Prince all day, but I must get home. I work at night."

"Yes, Kurt Pieper," The Shadow said.

Now he knew. All the power of his unique mind would not affect Kurt Pieper—because the young man had no knowledge of anything that had happened since some minutes before he killed the Prince! Time had stopped for Kurt Pieper while he stood there admiring the Arab Prince. For how long, The Shadow could not tell. But he would learn nothing—Pieper knew nothing!

Pieper had no knowledge of what he had done, of anything that had happened. *And, Pieper had no reason to have shot the Prince!* If Pieper had had any reason for his act, if he had planned it, or wanted it, or had even known of the Prince, the power of The Shadow to cloud men's minds would have revealed it all. But there was nothing in the mind of the young man that related in any way to the Prince.

"You must rest now," The Shadow said gently.

Kurt Pieper nodded. The blond youth stood, walked

to his bed, and lay down fully clothed. In an instant he was asleep. Above him the great black shape of The Shadow looked down. The eyes of the Avenger blazed. Someone had done this! Some force had been used to make this pale blond youth a killer—without rhyme or reason! Somehow, by some diabolical force, this innocent man had been made to kill a Prince he did not know—to kill quickly, ruthlessly, expertly!

Not only had some unknown force made Pieper a quick, expert assassin, but had somehow given him a gun he did not know he had, had induced the man to make an escape over a route he seemed to know! The eyes of The Shadow blazed again—what power could make a simple youth into a deadly assassin? An assassin with no knowledge of what he had done or why?

Even The Shadow felt a faint chill—because this, he knew only too well, was not the first such killing, and it would not be the last. But who? How? Why? All over the world the agents of The Shadow were watching, as his men in Berlin had watched, but now The Shadow knew the truth—it would do no good to catch the killers, they would know nothing!

It was the trained sixth sense of danger, learned with so much pain and effort years ago in the Orient, that made The Shadow turn. The great black shape glided across the dark room to the single window. His eyes that could see farther than any human eyes, and could see at night as clearly as in the day, searched for what he had sensed. He saw them on the roof of a building across the street.

Two men who stared toward the window where The Shadow stood. They appeared to be watching, just watching. They had not seen The Shadow. It was the room of the blond youth they watched as if to be sure of what he did. The Shadow whirled and glided from the small, shabby room of the sleeping Kurt Pieper. Whoever the men on the roof were, they must know something or they would not be interested in Kurt Pieper.

The Shadow seemed to float down the silent stairs and out into the now dark night of Berlin. The lights of the city glowed in the sky, but here all was dark and

silent. Unseen, the black shrouded figure moved across the street and into the next building. He seemed to rise up the stairs without touching them, soundless in the dark of the old building. Unseen and unheard, a black shape that moved among the shadows.

But the men on the roof were not caught by surprise. They were not unprepared. As the figure of The Shadow emerged onto the roof, making no sound, his keen ears heard a faint buzzing. The two men whirled. They saw no more than something that looked like part of the night itself. But it was enough. Warned by their buzzer warning system that someone was approaching, they ran. One man ran to the left toward a door down from the roof that was not the door The Shadow had come up through. The second man ran to the right toward the nearby roof of another building. Each man turned and fired three quick shots to slow their pursuer. The Shadow could not pursue both at once. He chose the man who had run to the right. His giant shape seemed to fly across the roof with the black cape streaming out like great wings.

The second man never looked back or attempted to aid his comrade. In an instant he had reached the other building and was gone. The first man, aware of The Shadow behind him, made a desperate effort to reach the safety of the exit door down. The Shadow bounded across his path and blocked the door, his fiery eyes concentrating on the man to reach and cloud his mind. The man saw his way blocked, whirled and ran toward the rear edge of the roof where it adjoined still another roof high above the streets of Berlin. The Shadow leaped through the night like a giant bird of prey and stood in front of the frantic man. The Shadow's laugh echoed across the high roofs of Berlin.

Frantic, the man fired madly at the great shadow that seemed to be everywhere at once. The Shadow's laugh rose mocking in the night, maddening. The man fled back and forth across the roof, always blocked by the inescapable black shape. The man fired at The Shadow, and when the man fired The Shadow was no longer where he had been. At last the gun in the man's hand clicked empty. The man stopped, backed up against the parapet of the

roof. The Shadow's eyes glowed as he seemed to float forward in the night toward the man. His figure loomed up above the man as if to envelop him like some monstrous fonce. The man looked wildly around. The Shadow laughed again.

The man stood perfectly still for a moment. His eyes, no longer frantic, stared calmly at the black shape before him. Then he turned and stepped over the edge of the roof. The man neither spoke, nor screamed, nor made any sound at all as he fell the six stories to the street where his body lay crushed and forever silent.

The Shadow stood at the edge of the roof and looked down. The chill he had felt when he realized that Kurt Pieper had not known why he killed, had had no reason, became colder now as The Shadow stared down at the dead body far below and realized that he was dealing with something almost beyond evil.

Below, people were now coming from the buildings to gather around the dead man. They had waited, and they came slowly. This was Berlin and a slum, and people did not expose themselves here. The people below looked up. One man pointed at the great black shape of The Shadow as it stood at the edge of the roof outlined against. The Shadow turned and faded into the night of the roof.

Fifteen minutes later a black Mercedes saloon drove along an empty slum street six blocks from where the Berlin Police were now gathered around the dead man who had jumped from the roof. The black car slowed before the dark mouth of a narrow street. Something seemed to leave the small street and glide swiftly to the car. The car drove off rapidly toward the heart of Berlin.

In the back seat of the Mercedes, The Shadow sat hidden in the dark of the interior. The driver, dressed in the full uniform of a chauffeur, drove steadily and carefully without once looking back. His alert eyes searched the street and all the side streets without seeming to be concerned with anything but his driving—a simple chauffeur driving his employer through Berlin. But this man was no ordinary chauffeur. On his finger there was a smaller replica of the fiery girasol ring worn by The Shadow.

Beneath his neat chauffeurs uniform there was an automatic pistol he knew how to use—there was also a blackjack, two small smoke bombs, and a knife, all of which he knew how to use. Under the calm exterior of the chauffeur were the trained muscles of a Sixth Dan Black Belt expert of *karate*, as befitted the Number Two agent of The Shadow.

“Report, Stanley,” The Shadow said sharply from the rear seat of the Mercedes as it drove on through dark streets.

“Two other incidents in Berlin alone,” Stanley, the chauffeur and agent, said. “A minor official was stabbed in broad daylight by a trusted assistant. A branch of the Central Bank was held up by a lone bandit who escaped but dropped his loot a block away. Both have been caught, they appear to be in some kind of trance.”

The Shadow’s eyes were grim in the rear seat. “Very good, go on.”

“Burbank signaled that he is ready to report from New York Central Communications.”

The Shadow leaned forward and picked up what appeared to be the microphone to a private executive tape recorder of the type used by so many busy businessmen these days. No more than the instrument of a businessman conducting his business away from his office. But the instrument in the Mercedes was not a tape recorder, it was a special short-wave radio designed by The Shadow himself and broadcasting on a secret wave-length no one could intercept. The Shadow pressed a button, flicked a miniature dial, and spoke sharply.

“Report!”

A voice answered instantly. As if the voice were in the black car, and as if the man behind the voice sat at a broadcasting console from which he never moved. This was, in essence, true—the voice was that of Burbank, the rarely seen Communications agent of The Shadow who never moved from his secret blue-lighted room hidden high in the Park Avenue building in New York that was the Central Headquarters of The Shadow’s vast crime-fighting organization. Now, in the far-off blue-lighted room that seemed to have no walls, but only the giant

communications console set in a hazy blue glow, Burbank reported to his Chief.

"All reports not in, but to date there are reports of the murder of a Deputy Premier of The Soviet Union, and a Deputy Foreign Minister, by their Military Attache. The robbery of an armored truck in France, murder of three of the four guards, by a teenage gang. An unexplained and inexplicable purse snatching in San Francisco by a young man with no record and no motive. The surrender of a United States Special Forces unit to a smaller Viet Cong unit that was hopelessly defeated! In all cases there is no explanation, no motive. In each case except the last where the men are not available for interview, the criminals are reported in a trance state, eager, even happy. They seem to have no knowledge of what they have done. Two are now reported out of the trance, but they cannot explain their actions. Hypnotism and lie detectors show no results."

"Is that all?" The Swadow intoned.

"Report one incident in New York, Agent Lane is investigating in company with Commissioner Weston. Famous actor Patrick McBride stabbed to death on stage by fellow actor. Said actor also in trance, now out of it, no knowledge of his action, and no apparent motive to date."

"Instruct Margo to continue investigation," The Shadow said. "Is that complete?"

"Report completed. Standing by for further information."

The Shadow clicked off his special radio and sat back. His eyes blazed but he did not speak. The Mercedes drove on through the dark streets. Now it approached the gaudy and lighted streets of the heart of the booming city. Here there was no sign of the giant holocaust of twenty years ago. The Mercedes moved more slowly in the heavier traffic, between the bright cafes, the loud clubs, and all the people out for another gaudy night on the town. The chauffeur, Stanley, turned now to ask his boss where to go from here.

"Where to now, boss?"

The man in the back seat of the Mercedes considered. The man was not The Shadow!

Instead of the black-shrouded figure with the hawk

nose and burning eyes beneath the broad brim of the black slouch hat, the man who now sat in the back seat of the Mercedes seemed a smaller man, stockier and shorter. He was, actually, none of these things, but had the power of muscular control to seem this different from the tall figure of The Shadow. This new man's eyes were hooded and impassive, quiet and without fire. His face showed no emotions, and had a quiet, thoughtful aspect. A steady, passive face where the face of The Shadow was all power and vitality. And yet, with all the differences—the short cropped grey hair, the neat and expensive business suit, the entire aura of the successful business man he was—this new man somehow strangely resembled the black cloaked Avenger.

The resemblance was not an accident. The man now in the back seat of the black Mercedes was Lamont Cranston, wealthy socialite and businessman, close friend of Police Commissioner Ralph Weston of New York City, well-known amateur criminologist—and the major alter-ego The Shadow assumed to hide his true identity. There were few in the world who knew the power that hid beneath the passive surface of Lamont Cranston. Only the members of the cloaked Avenger's far-flung secret organization, the small but powerful army of dedicated crime fighters, knew that their Chief and Lamont Cranston were the same man. There was no one on Earth who knew who The Shadow really was, or had been before he became The Shadow and his many alter-egos. Only two people had ever known the real man—The Shadow himself, and his master Chen T'a Tze. The Master had been dead many years now, his powers passed on to The Shadow, and it no longer mattered who The Shadow had been so many years before he became The Shadow. That man was gone, and only The Shadow now existed—a cloaked instrument dedicated to perpetual vigilance in an evil world, a man of many faces and mysterious powers that were used only for good and justice.

The face The Shadow now used was that of Lamont Cranston, the international business man whose far-flung business interests were the cover for the organization of The Shadow. Beneath his clothes, in the hidden pockets,

the cloak and slouch hat and fire-opal girasol ring waited for the next time they would be called into play. Beneath his impassive face and hooded eyes, the mind of The Shadow considered this new and chilling problem that faced the world—men who killed without reason, or motive, or knowledge of what they had done!

Cranston leaned forward and spoke quietly.

“To the airport, Stanley. I must find out all that the authorities know before we can begin to fight this evil.”

The black Mercedes drove faster toward Templehof Airport.

3

THE JET touched down at Idlewild Airport in New York and taxied up to the unloading area. Outside the gate where the incoming passengers would arrive, a woman stood quietly. She was a striking woman, the kind who made the heads of men turn as they passed and admired her. She was beautiful, but it was more than that. It was in her eyes, the carriage of her lithe body, an inner power that radiated from her no matter what she did, whether she was walking or laughing or standing quietly. Her dark hair shined under the airport lights, and framed an intelligent face. More than intelligent, her eyes revealed a mind that was sharp and quick. Apparently doing nothing more than waiting for the arrival of some friend, she was actually aware of all that went on around her, was watching everything that happened, everyone who passed. Not a tall woman, the poise of her lithe frame made her seem taller than she was. Her alertness hidden, she stood passively, and yet the men who passed all looked at her. They looked at the slim curve of her hips beneath her reserved dark blue suit, the high and full breasts that swelled the blue cloth, the long and slim legs. The woman did not look at the men, or she did not seem to look. Actually she saw them all, and inside she smiled. She was a woman, she enjoyed the eyes of men, but

her mind, as her life, was on other matters. Now she saw the two men emerge from the covered passage from the jet to the building. She walked to them.

"The car is outside, Lamont," the woman said to the well-dressed and impassive man who smiled to her.

"Very good, Margo," Lamont Cranston said. "We have a lot of work to do. Get the luggage, will you, Stanley?"

"Right, boss," Stanley said. The chauffeur-bodyguard-Number Two agent of The Shadow smiled at the woman as he went for the luggage.

Cranston and Margo Lane walked slowly toward the waiting car. Cranston told his Number One agent and private secretary all that had happened in Berlin. The woman listened intently, her quick mind digesting it all, analyzing it in seconds. When Cranston finished, Margo nodded thoughtfully.

"The case here is much the same, Lamont," Margo Lane said. "The police have gotten nowhere. Detective Cardona is on the case, and he admits he is stumped. The actor who killed McBride was an acquaintance, but hardly a close friend. He had nothing against McBride, the police can find no professional motive and no private motive. His record all the way back is clean and quiet and normal. He's a family man, stable, has no vices anyone can find."

Cranston's hooded eyes frowned. "It sounds like all the other cases. How long was he in the trance state?"

"About twenty-four hours. He slept some twelve hours and woke up out of it. He has absolutely no memory of killing McBride. Commissioner Weston sent for a hypnotist, a psychiatrist, and a polygraph expert. They all say he is telling the truth—he had no reason to kill McBride, and he doesn't know that he did. The last he remembers is dueling on the stage with McBride. In fact . . ."

Cranston broke in and finished the sentence. "In fact he thought he was still on the stage until he woke up twenty-four hours later!"

"Exactly, Lamont," Margo said. "What do you think?"

"Some outside force of diabolical power, a force we

can't even guess about yet," Cranston said. "I want to check all the reports, but I'm convinced that they will all be essentially the same."

"Commissioner Weston wants to see you immediately, Lamont," Margo said. "He has an FBI man and an Interpol Agent here in New York to discuss the affair."

"Very good, Margo," Cranston said.

They had reached the car now, Cranston's well-known Rolls-Royce, and stood in the New York night waiting for Stanley with the luggage. It was Margo who noticed the two men. She touched Cranston lightly on the arm as if patting him affectionately. The socialite nodded imperceptibly. He had seen the two men. The men were ordinary enough to a casual glance, but Margo and Cranston knew better. The men were too casual and too alert at the same time. They were standing in the parking area, looking at their watches from time to time as if waiting for someone. But they were not waiting for anyone, unless it was Margo and Cranston. They stood apart as if not connected, but they could not resist an occasional glance at each other. Not far from them was an empty grey car with the engine idling. They were much too intent on being casual, and the sharp eyes of Cranston detected the faint bulge of weapons beneath their suit coats.

When Stanley arrived with the luggage, Cranston whispered to him to act normal and get straight into the Rolls-Royce. Margo and Cranston got into the back seat. Stanley drove quite slowly out of the parking area, made his turn toward the approach to the Van Wyck Expressway, and suddenly gunned the Rolls into high speed. The Rolls leaped ahead for perhaps a quarter of a mile. Then Stanley suddenly slowed. The chauffeur looked into the rear-view mirror. Behind the Rolls the grey car came roaring rapidly into sight, slammed on its brakes as it saw the Rolls ahead, and fell into position behind the Rolls. Stanley nodded his head once, and drove onto the Expressway. In the back seat Cranston did not turn to look behind. He spoke quietly to Stanley.

"All right, Stanley. Drive normally, don't try to lose them. They'll be suspicious that we've spotted them after

your maneuver, but they should decide it's safe if we act normally."

"Right, boss," Stanley said without looking around.

The big Rolls-Royce drove steadily along the Expressway, neither too fast nor too slow, and then along Grand Central Parkway toward the city. The grey car maintained its distance behind, neither gaining nor losing ground, reacting neither too quickly nor too slowly when a situation arose where it could have lost the Rolls. Cranston watched the grey car in a special mirror set in the back of the front seat that was equipped as a traveling desk. From its actions, the grey car was in the hands of an expert. Cranston frowned to himself. This would be the second pair he had encountered. He had no doubt that the two men following were somehow connected to the strange assassinations. The question was, how had they found out about Cranston's interest? How much did they know? Or was it Cranston they were following? It could be Margo! Margo had been investigating the murder of the actor Patrick McBride here in New York. It could very well be Margo they were watching.

The Rolls plunged into the bright white maw of the Midtown Tunnel. The grey car followed. On the Manhattan side, Stanley guided the Rolls into the exit and out into Third Avenue. The grey car was close behind. Stanley looked briefly in his rear mirror. Cranston nodded. Stanley turned the Rolls not uptown toward the Central Headquarters of The Shadow in the secret rooms behind the lavish offices of Lamont Cranston, but downtown toward the dark streets of the Lower East Side. It was a standard plan, and the Rolls drove carefully but unhesitatingly downtown. The grey car did not hesitate to follow. Stanley guided the Rolls down Third Avenue until they came to a darker cross street than most. Just before the Rolls reached the corner, Stanley jammed down the accelerator and took the turn on two wheels. In the rear seat Cranston tensed—but it was not Cranston in the back seat now, it was The Shadow.

The Rolls went around the corner with a loud squeal of tires. It straightened and roared away along the side street. But The Shadow was no longer in the back

seat. Alone in the back seat, Margo Lane bent forward over the small microphone. In the dark street The Shadow glided into the black mouth of an alley. The grey car slewed wide as it came around the corner. The man who sat beside the driver peered ahead, saw the Rolls racing away, and pointed, his mouth open and shouting. Intent on the vanishing Rolls-Royce, the two men in the grey car did not see the shadowy figure in the mouth of the alley. They did not see the .45 automatic pointed toward them. They did not hear the two quick shots that ripped into their right front tire. But they felt the effects of the blown tire. The grey car skidded and slewed across the dark side street. The driver fought to maintain some control. He was a good driver, an expert, and he brought the car almost to a halt before it slammed into the wall of a dark brownstone tenement.

The two men staggered from the wreck. They shook their heads and gazed off after the now vanished Rolls-Royce. The taller of the two, the driver, began to swear. The other man, shorter and heavier, looked around to see what had blown the tire. He saw The Shadow and stiffened. The Shadow stood in full view at the mouth of the alley. In that instant, as the short man spoke sharply to the tall man, The Shadow learned what he wanted to know. They recognized the black shrouded figure—they had been told by the only man who had seen him, the one who had escaped in Berlin! So—they were one group! Now to learn just what that group was.

The men advanced toward The Shadow, their pistols ready in their hands. The Shadow turned and vanished into the blackness of the alley. The two men broke into a run and ran into the alley. At the far end, The Shadow allowed them to see him. The taller man fired. The Shadow's laugh mocked them through the dark alley. The tall man fired again. The Shadow appeared to vanish into the wall at the end of the alley. The two men ran to the wall. They touched the wall. It was solid. The two men began to swear. They ran along the wall but found no way through. There was a mocking laugh from the other side of the wall. The tall man told his shorter companion to stay at the wall while he, the tall man,

ran around the block to the other side. The tall man reached the other block and saw that the alley continued on the other side of the wall. He raised his pistol and stepped into the alley with a cruel smile on his thin face. He saw the great black shape of The Shadow lurking in the dark of the alley. He raised his pistol and squeezed the trigger.

The shot never came.

The tall man held the pistol, squeezed the trigger, but his eyes saw the blazing eyes of The Shadow as the Avenger moved toward him through the alley. There was no sound in the alley, nothing moved except the shrouded figure with the fiery eyes that burned into the tall man. The tall man brushed at his eyes, pointed his pistol, tried to squeeze the trigger. He could not look away from the burning eyes of the giant figure that seemed to grow in the alley until it filled all his vision. The tall man held his pistol in both hands. Nothing happened. He fought, the tall man, but a thick fog seemed to roll through his mind and he could not squeeze the trigger. Slowly the pistol lowered in his hands, came down to his side. He stood there in the silence of the alley, his mind clouded by some power he did not understand, his pistol useless at his side. He could not shoot, but he could move. The power of The Shadow did not hypnotize a man, and the tall man made a final effort. He turned and stumbled, ran staggering toward the mouth of the alley. The Shadow reached him in two great leaps, his powerful hand reaching out to catch the fleeing man by the shoulder. The tall man turned, tried to fight through the fog inside his brain, swung his fist at empty air. With a short, chilling laugh, The Shadow caught the man's neck, squeezed, and the tall man fell limp to the stones of the alley.

The Shadow did not pause, but whirled and glided back to the wall. He went through the wall using the secret passage ready and prepared for just this kind of emergency. He came out the disguised secret door on the other side. The short man saw the black-shrouded shape come through the wall, come out of the wall itself, and fired without hesitation. The Shadow leaped aside, the bullet striking

brick chips from the wall inches from his head. With the short man there was no time to cloud his mind. The man had acted without pause or thought. The Shadow leaped through the dark. A second shot sang passed his ear. Then his black shape seemed to consume the short man like some great bird swallowing its prey. A sharp blow of the edge of his long hand felled the short man without a sound. The Shadow stood over the fallen man. Then he bent, retrieved the pistol the short man had used, and picked him up. He carried the man, enveloped by the folds of his black cloak, like a feather, and vanished again from this part of the alley through the secret passage in the wall.

The Shadow emerged on the other side of the wall and glided swiftly to the tall man who still lay unconscious on the stones of this part of the alley. His tall, black figure bent and laid the short man beside his companion. His fiery eyes blazed once as he looked down at the two unconscious men. Then he gazed deep into the glowing depths of the fire-opal girasol ring on his long finger. The ring began to glow even more brightly. The Shadow waited in the silent alley, his black-cloaked figure as motionless and invisible as the shadows of the alley itself. Then a car approached the end of the alley. The car slowed and turned into the alley. It was a New York city taxicab, a gaudy yellow and red taxicab. The man who stepped out of the driver's seat was a small, peppery man who wore an old leather cap. On the cap was the badge of the New York cab driver, which is what Moe Shrevnitz was. But Shrevnitz, or Shrevvy to those who knew his true identity, was not only a taxi driver. He was one of the ten most trusted agents of The Shadow, and he had been ready, alerted by Margo on the secret radio, to come at the call of The Shadow. Now he stepped to the two fallen men and helped The Shadow put them into the taxi. The taxi drove unseen from the alley and turned north toward the Park Avenue office building where the offices of Lamont Cranston occupied the entire floor.

It was Lamont Cranston himself who stepped from the taxi at the special entrance to the building known only

to The Shadow and his agents. There was no one on the street. In an instant, Cranston and Shrevvy had the two unconscious men in through the special entrance and into the secret private elevator. The elevator moved silently upward. It stopped at the floor that housed the elegant offices of Lamont Cranston, and all his many employees. But where the elevator stopped was not the offices of Lamont Cranston, was not known to any of the employees of Lamont Cranston except his private secretary, Margo Lane, and his chauffeur, Stanley.

Where the elevator stopped, where the doors opened and the men were carried out, was the hidden maze of blue-lighted rooms that was the Central Headquarters of The Shadow.

Moments later Moe Shrevnitz was back behind the wheel of his taxi. Lamont Cranston had gone out through the bookcase into his private office where a worried Margo Lane waited. And the two men lay still unconscious and imprisoned in two of the blue-lighted rooms that seemed to have no walls and no ceiling but to float in the perpetual blue haze of The Shadow.

4

COMMISSIONER WESTON of the New York City Police was an imposing man with distinguished, iron-grey hair. A renowned police official, Weston was also a close friend to Cranston, and a fellow member of the exclusive Cobalt Club. When Cranston entered his office, Weston greeted him warmly but with the look of a man who had not had much sleep. The Police Commissioner was worried. Weston introduced the two other men in his office.

"Lamont, this is Erskine Parker of the FBI," Weston said, "and Mr. Hawkins of Interpol."

The two men nodded to Cranston. Hawkins, a tall, slender Britisher, smiled and extended his long, bony hand. "We can use just about anything in the way

of help or ideas we can muster. Glad to know you, Cranston."

Parker, the FBI man, seemed considerably less pleased to know Cranston. At least, the FBI man was not pleased that Cranston was present at this moment. Cranston showed no reaction. He had worked with the FBI before, and he had found many times that FBI agents and supervisors did not welcome either help or advice from outside the Bureau. They liked to run a one man, or one organization, show. Cranston had handled them before this. Now he smiled.

"Well, I'll promise not to get underfoot, Inspector Parker," Cranston said. "I'll be completely at your disposal. Just think of me as a willing helper. Not a step or word without your advice."

"I've heard some good things about you, Cranston," Parker said grudgingly, but somewhat mollified. "That Pavlic case turned out well enough."

Hawkins arched his eyebrow. "I've heard rather a great many good things about Mr. Cranston. Should have been a ruddy policeman from what I hear. I expect it was a bit below your full abilities, though, eh? You don't get rich detecting, what?"

Hawkins laughed a short, clipped laugh. Inspector Parker glared at the Interpol man. The FBI agent did not seem especially pleased to have the help of the international police either. It was clear from his face that Parker thought Interpol a chancy outfit, little more than amateurs themselves, and even a little suspect as to whose side they were on. Cranston decided he would have trouble with the FBI man, except that he did not expect to work with him.

Weston spoke now, and Parker was all attention. The Police Commissioner of New York was something else again, and Parker showed considerable respect to the older man. Weston pointed to a map of the world that had been hung on the wall. There were pins stuck in the map at many places.

"As you see, Lamont, we have pinpointed all these peculiar events—assassinations, murders, robberies, even petty thefts. Ever since McBride was murdered, and

I heard from Washington about the other affairs, I've kept myself posted," Weston explained. "I think we have all of them on the map. You can see that there seems to be no pattern, except that every area of the world has been affected."

"Which in itself is a pattern," Hawkins the Interpol man pointed out.

"How do you mean, Mr. Hawkins?" Cranston asked, his hooded eyes impassive as he looked up at the map.

"Too much to be coincidence," Hawkins said. "Assuming that these things are all connected, then simple chance would have been almost certain to miss some area of the world. Law of averages says that at least one continent, one major country or power area, would have been missed if random chance was at work. But all continents have been hit, all major countries and power areas—even Red China! I got the report on our grapevine a few hours ago. Minor Peking official went berserk and killed four delegates from Cambodia. No official word, of course. But our source is usually reliable."

Parker frowned. The FBI man looked at the map. "It could be chance, no way of ruling it out. Anyway, my job is with the crimes in the United States. From a national standpoint, I can't see a real pattern."

"What about the criminals, Inspector?" Cranston said quietly.

"Well, I admit they are all the same—no motive, no prior relationship with deceased or other parties, no knowledge of the crime, all in some kind of trance. I think they were all drugged."

Hawkins shook his head. "We've gone into that, Inspector. No drug we know could induce these effects. No, we'll stake our reputation on there being no drug involved."

"Maybe," Parker said, unimpressed, "but our lab men are still working on it."

"Perhaps I can think of something you've all missed," Cranston said. His hooded eyes were studying the map. "You know, a fresh viewpoint."

"Good idea," Hawkins said.

Weston nodded. The Commissioner went over each strange murder, assassination, robbery, and minor crime in turn.

The list was long and complete—and all within the last week. Hawkins and Cranston listened intently, the Interpol man with his eyes closed to better concentrate. Parker seemed bored, but as cases in the United States were discussed, he showed more interest. From time to time during the recital of crime, Cranston made a note on a pad in front of him. At last Weston finished and the office of the Commissioner became silent. It was Cranston who broke the silence. The wealthy socialite leaned forward in his chair and began to speak quietly.

“First, it is obvious that the crimes are all part of one complex, one conspiracy. Exactly what or why is not clear,” Cranston said. “While there is a definite pattern to the *facts* of the crimes, there is no apparent pattern to the *types* of crimes.”

“Meaning?” Hawkins asked.

“Meaning, I think, that it is not the crime itself that was important to whoever caused the crimes. Or, to put it another way, the motive for the crimes is something not connected to the victims or the criminal at all!”

Inspector Parker snorted. “Theories! Take it from a professional, all of you, that all we have to do is dig deep enough, find the key, and every single one of these crimes will turn out to have a specific motive, a specific reason!”

Cranston nodded. “Perhaps, Inspector, but let’s look at some more facts. First, we have found no motives yet, and we have found each criminal to be in some kind of trancelike state—as if under some outside control. Each case is so similar it is beyond much doubt that the cause is the same each time.

“Second, and most interesting, is this: in almost every case, *nothing was gained by the crime!* Do you see? In all of the assassinations the men killed were not key men, or were quickly replaceable, or caused no particular damage to their Governments. In each private murder there is no evidence that anyone gained anything important. In each robbery the loot was recovered! In most cases of robbery, there was little attempt to get away with the loot. It is all too much to be coincidence.”

There was another silence in the big office of Commis-

sioner Weston. Hawkins nodded over and over as if Cranston had pointed out something that was not only true but was something he, Hawkins, should have seen earlier. Weston studied the pins in the map as if the answer were somehow there. Even Inspector Parker seemed grudgingly impressed this time. The FBI man opened his notebook and checked down the list of crimes in the United States. Parker nodded.

"Unless we consider the murder of one actor by another actor a kind of gain, Cranston is right," Parker said.

"Which brings me back to my real point," Cranston went on. "It is not the crime itself that is important to whoever is causing all the crimes. The actual motive for these crimes has no connection to either the person who committed it or to the victims! Or, to put it still another way, gentlemen, the motive we are looking for has to be connected to ALL the crimes taken as a unit!"

Weston was puzzled. "*All* the crimes as a unit?"

Hawkins stood up and paced the office. "Of course, Cranston is right again. Every criminal act is done for a purpose, even an insane purpose, so these crimes must have a purpose. If, as appears clear, that purpose is not in each individual crime, then it has to be in the totality of the crimes. Is that what you mean, Cranston?"

Cranston nodded his impassive face. "Exactly."

Parker scowled. "But that implies one big mastermind, and one damned big organization. How come we haven't spotted anyone at any of the scenes? How come the people aren't aware of anyone working on them?"

No one had an answer for the second question of Parker's, and Cranston could not answer the first. To tell about the four men The Shadow had met would have been to reveal the involvement of The Shadow, and to reveal Cranston's connection to the organization of the secret Avenger. That could not be done, so Cranston was silent. No one else had anything to say. Weston looked at all of them.

"Well, my department will continue working on the murder of McBride, but with our new ideas in mind.

We'll look for some outside influence or group having no particular connection to either the killer or the victim."

Hawkins nodded. "I'll get back to London and start Interpol working along the same lines. We should come up with something. As a matter of fact, just before I left, the Paris office came up with what may be a lead. I didn't think much about it at the time, but with these new ideas it could be important."

Cranston was alert behind his impassive face and hooded eyes. The wealthy socialite leaned forward in his chair. But he spoke quietly. "A lead? To what, Hawkins?"

Hawkins rubbed his gaunt chin. "Well, at one of the killings they had in Paris they observed a man. Now this man is rather special. They didn't notice him doing anything, but he was close to the killer. They didn't really connect it because they did not have the idea of some totally unconnected organization. But now, well . . ."

"How is this man special?" Cranston asked.

"His name is Jary Du Neuf, a French Algerian. He was once a Captain in the Foreign Legion. After the Legion was disbanded, he came to Paris. For a time he was quite active in politics of the far Right. There were rumors he was also involved in some clandestine movement to retake Algeria. We investigated because the movement was also suspected of committing robberies to finance their operations. We never got any proof, and after a time the organization seemed to give up, or at least we heard no more about it. After that Du Neuf dropped out of sight. He vanished. Naturally, that interested us and we have been on the watch for him. One of our men spotted him at the scene of one of the recent murders."

Parker snorted. "That's pretty thin, Hawkins."

"It seems to be about all we have at the moment. And I'm not at all sure it is that thin, actually. Du Neuf is a fanatic, a very dangerous man. And at the same time he likes an organization. He likes discipline. He would be just the sort of chap who would belong to an organization capable of such a massive world-wide operation. We never for a moment believed that he had stopped

his activities, despite the fact that he dropped out of sight. We have been expecting him to reappear in some organization. It rather looks like he has."

"Anyway," Weston said, "it is something to work on. We must begin somewhere. I think everyone's suggestions are good. Hawkins back in London and alert Paris. Parker back to Washington. I should think that young man in San Francisco who stole the purse might be an excellent place to start. After all, he was on a cable car, a circumscribed area. Someone might have seen something."

"It's worth a try," Parker admitted.

Weston nodded to Cranston. "I'd like you to stay with me, Lamont. Margo had been working with Joe Cardona, I think she can fill you in and we can work together."

"A good idea, Commissioner," Cranston said, without adding that The Shadow had ideas of his own, work of his own to do.

The meeting broke up, each man went his own way. Hawkins to Idlewild to return to London, and Parker to La Guardia to make the short flight to Washington. After they had gone, Commissioner Weston looked at Cranston.

"What do you really think, Lamont?"

"Just about what I said, Commissioner," the socialite answered slowly. "The key here is just why these crimes have been committed. Once we know why, I think we'll know how. At the moment I have no real theories."

Weston thought. "Could someone be trying to throw us off? I mean, perhaps some particular crime is being planned, or is about to happen, and all this has been to make us overlook its importance."

"That is entirely possible," Cranston said. The thought had crossed his mind at the start. "And if so, then it's almost sure that all my theories and ideas are exactly what they want. I'm playing right into their hands. There is one big fact against it, though."

"One fact?"

Cranston nodded, his hooded eyes half smiling. "Normally, an operation like that would commit the real crime at the same time as the cover crimes. This hasn't happened,

unless we have missed something. None of the crimes to date have seemed to be of importance enough for such an elaborate cover."

Weston nodded. "I hope you're right, Lamont."

"So do I," Cranston said grimly. "But I'm sure I am. No, Commissioner, this all has some simple but diabolical motive. I'm convinced of that. When we know the motive, we'll know what it's all about."

"Then I hope we know soon," Weston said. "I'll tell Cardona that you'll be working closely with him."

"Right," Cranston said.

The socialite left the elegant office of the Commissioner. He rode down in the elevator to where Stanley was waiting for him in the Rolls-Royce. The chauffeur-bodyguard drove quickly away uptown toward the Park Avenue building. When the big car was rolling amid the heavy traffic of the city, Stanley spoke without once turning his head.

"Burbank had a report from Marcel Guyot in Paris," Stanley said.

Cranston sat alert. Marcel Guyot was Shrevvy's counterpart in Paris, a Parisian taxi driver. He was also The Shadow's most efficient agent in the French capital.

"What was it?" Cranston snapped.

"Guyot reports seeing a man at two of the killings, there were three in Paris all told yesterday. Guyot says Interpol reported the man at one killing, and one of Marcel's own assistants saw him at another. In both cases he was close to the eventual killer, but did nothing suspicious as far as anyone could tell. His name is . . ."

"Jary Du Neuf," Cranston said quickly.

Stanley looked into his rearview mirror. "That's it, boss. How did you know?"

"Interpol reported the one incident," Cranston said. So! Jary Du Neuf had been at two killings! It was not coincidence. Cranston was sure of that. It would be good to investigate Jary Du Neuf. It was a job for The Shadow, but The Shadow, as Cranston, would be concentrating on McBride in New York. Marcel Guyot was a good agent, but this called for something more special.

"To the office, and fast, Stanley," Cranston said.

Stanley nodded, and the great black Rolls-Royce sped through the city. Expertly, Stanley guided the car through the heavy city traffic and pulled finally to a stop in front of the Park Avenue building. Lamont Cranston got out and strode into the lobby. The doorman greeted him with the deference reserved for the head of a company that occupied an entire floor. Cranston smiled his greeting and took the elevator up to his suite of offices. In his private office, Margo was waiting.

"Margo, I want you to go to Paris and contact Marcel Guyot," Cranston said, wasting no time. He explained the situation, and the suspicious actions of Jary Du Neuf, to his secretary and Number One agent.

"Right away, Lamont?" Margo asked quietly.

"As soon as I interrogate our two prisoners," Cranston said, and smiled grimly. "Or as soon as The Shadow does. They might tell us something."

"Very well, Lamont."

"When you go, it will have to be in disguise," Cranston went on, pacing the office slowly, his hooded eyes as impassive and innocent-seeming as always with only brief flashes of the power of The Shadow in his eyes as he talked. "They followed us, and I think it was you they knew. If they know you, then they will know me by now. I may have to assume a different guise if I have to follow you to Paris."

"Henry Arnaud?" Margo guessed.

Cranston nodded. "I think so. This is just the right time for Arnaud to visit his Paris office. It would not be suspicious. So I think you better go as Ellen Morgan. Leave here as yourself, and if you are followed, lose them and change to Ellen Morgan. I don't think they will bother with Ellen Morgan."

"All right, Lamont," Margo said.

"Good," Cranston said. "Wait here."

The wealthy socialite turned and walked straight to the heavy bookcase in the wall of his office. He touched a hidden button, the bookcase swung silently away from the wall, and Cranston vanished into the wall.

5

THE TALL MAN moved on the floor of the blue room. He opened his eyes, blinked, and closed his eyes again. His head felt thick, fuzzy. He was aware that he had been drugged. He opened his eyes again and remembered the alley and the black-shrouded figure that had mocked him and somehow made it impossible for him to pull the trigger on his pistol. The black-cloaked man who had been reported from Berlin! He had been following the woman, the Lane woman, and the car had gone around a corner, and then their tire had blown. That he remembered. And the alley. The great black shape seeming to enfold him, gather him in. He remembered that.

But then what?

Where was he?

The alley. He should be in the alley. But he was not in the alley.

He looked around the blue room and his blood ran cold.

A room of blue light. No walls. No ceiling. Nothing holding him and yet he knew he was a prisoner. He could see nothing but the strange blue light, a hazy blue light that seemed to have no source. There was nothing in the room—no furniture, no instruments, no doors or windows. The tall man swore aloud, and struggled to his feet.

“You don’t scare me!” the tall man said aloud.

Silence. Not even an echo.

“You hear? I’m not afraid of you! You’re in trouble, you hear me?”

His words seemed to melt into the silent blue light.

“You can’t fight us! No one can fight us! They’ll get you, count on it! My unit will take care of you!”

The tall man listened. His words faded. There was no answer. The tall man began to shout. His shouts vanished. He started to walk. He could not walk. Something he

could not see seemed to be holding him. He brushed his eyes. The thick blue light of the room seemed to be inside his brain. A fog in his brain, and it was blue now. The tall man shouted again.

Then he heard the faint sound—a sound of movement.

The tall man whirled. The sound had come from behind him. He saw nothing but blue light, the thick haze of blue everywhere he looked and inside his own mind. He saw nothing but the thick blue—but he heard.

A low, chilling laugh floated from all around him.

“So, they will get me?” an eerie voice said.

A voice from nowhere.

“Where? Who are you? Where are you!” the tall man cried.

The laugh came again, low and mocking. “I am here, in front of you, can’t you see me? No, of course you can’t see me. But I can see you, Milo Varga, and I see a man who is afraid!”

The tall man sneered. “Afraid? Of what would . . . You know my name! How do you know my name?”

The unseen voice laughed. “I know much about you, Milo Varga. I know who you are and what you are. You cannot hide from The Shadow. You are a Yugoslav, a former Chetnik, an opponent of Tito. You and your partner were following a woman named Margo Lane. You are involved with the murder of . . .”

Milo Varga swore. “Menander! He talked. I knew he was a weakling! So you know my name, and you know something about me! What good will that do you? Do you think we are fools?”

The voice of The Shadow was grim. “Menander did not talk, Milo Varga. It was you who told me who you are. You talked, and you will talk more. You will tell me what organization you belong to, and what they are doing, and how they killed Patrick McBride!”

The tall man turned pale. His eyes darted around the room, searching the thick blue haze for the source of the unseen voice. His manner was defiant, but his eyes betrayed his fear. It was the blue room itself, the unknown source of the light, the emptiness, the disembodied

voice that mocked him. His eyes searched frantically for the source of the voice, while his manner blustered.

"I will tell you nothing!"

"You will tell all, Milo Varga!"

"Never! The Shadow? What kind of name is that? Who are you who calls yourself The Shadow!"

"I am justice, Milo Varga, I am the avenger of all evil. I know the evil that lurks in the hearts of men, and I destroy that evil! You will tell me all, you will tell me now!"

The tall man opened his mouth to laugh—but he did not laugh. He brushed at his eyes, held his head in both hands as he felt a surge of power inside his brain. The thick blue fog that had been clouding his mind since he awakened in the eerie blue room became thicker, more powerful, seeming to move and take hold of his mind. The tall man fought it, held his head, shook his head, and his eyes searched the blue light in fear.

"Where are you! Show yourself! Are you afraid . . . I . . . stop . . . stop . . . !"

The tall man writhed where he stood as if in pain, as if some great pressure were pressing against his brain. He tried to see through the blue haze. He suddenly fell to his knees, twisting and writhing. Then he stopped moving, his hands came away from his head, and he stared at a spot in the gloom that seemed suddenly darker.

A darker area of the blue light that seemed to move, grow.

He saw the two burning eyes, the hawk nose under the wide brim of the black slouch hat, the great black shape that merged into the blue light itself. A giant shape that was bathed in a thick blue haze. The fiery eyes and the long fingers with the glowing fire-opal girasol ring moved close to the man where he crouched on his knees in the blue light.

"Now you can see me, Milo Varga! Now you know there is no escape and no way you can resist me. You will tell me all that I must know. What is your organization! Why was Patrick McBride murdered. Why was the Arab Prince assassinated? How were these murders done? You will tell me!"

The tall man, Milo Varga, held his head, writhed.
"No . . . no . . . no . . ."

"You cannot resist! Tell me!"

"I . . . I . . . can't tell . . . you . . ."

The blazing eyes of The Shadow bent low over the huddled Milo Varga. His voice was low, strong.

"You are afraid of the destruct under your skin? No, do not be afraid! Do not think you can escape that way, Milo Varga! I know of such things. Look!"

The long fingers of The Shadow emerged from the blue light of the room and reached down to the chest of the cringing Milo Varga. The hands of The Shadow tore open the shirt of Varga. On the chest of the tall man, directly over his heart, there was a bandage. The Shadow laughed.

"It has been removed, Milo Varga! You cannot evade the truth by death!"

The tall man looked down at the bandage on his chest. For a long moment Varga stared at the bandage. Then turned dead white. Varga went white, and then began to laugh. An hysterical laugh. A laugh that was half a low scream as Varga gazed white-faced at the bandage where the self-destruct had been removed. Varga laughed and half-moaned at the same time. His wild eyes looked up into the fiery eyes of The Shadow.

"How long? How long ago?"

"Do not try to receive me!" The Shadow intoned.

"You fool!" Varga cried. "How long ago was it removed?"

"Perhaps an hour," The Shadow said. "What trick do you think to try, Milo Varga?"

"Trick?" Varga said, laughed, his eyes like the eyes of a dead fish. "Trick? No trick, Shadow. No, there isn't any trick. I'm dead. That's all. I'm a dead man. No trick."

In the silent blue-lighted room without ceiling or walls, The Shadow watched Milo Varga. The man was terrified, and yet still defiant. But now there was a change, a greater terror, and yet a certain strange calm as if some greater horror had come to him but had lifted part of his original fear. As if some decision had been made—

a decision Varga feared but also welcomed and so had become calm.

"Dead?" The Shadow asked sharply.

Varga laughed his hysterical laugh. "A dead man. I walk, I talk, I laugh, but I'm dead. They fooled you! Yes, Mr. The Shadow, you have been fooled! Didn't you think that they would have guessed that someone might try to remove the self-destruct?"

"A second device?" The Shadow snapped, his fiery eyes blazing.

But now Varga had almost stopped listening to The Shadow. The tall man had lost his fear of the blue room, seemed, somehow, to have escaped the blue room. He spoke quietly and with only a small edge of bitterness.

"We all know," Varga said. "When we join we know the way it has to be. We know what it means to be captured." Varga looked at the towering shape of The Shadow that blended with the blue light of the room. "I'm dead, you see? When the destruct was removed it released a poison. An hour, perhaps ten minutes more or less. The poison is fatal, there is no antidote once it is in the blood. Only before. Our doctors can remove it, and only our doctors. They have an antidote given before the removal. It is the only way to stop the poison. An hour ago, you say? Then I have a few minutes, perhaps seconds. You won't learn anything from me."

The Shadow watched the man. Varga had that strange calm the Avenger had seen before on men about to die, men who considered themselves already dead. It was a calm of resignation, of finality, of the end to all problems and decisions. All decisions were out of Varga's hands now, if the tall men were telling the truth, and The Shadow knew that Varga was telling the truth. When The Shadow had discovered the self-destruct he had known, again, that he was dealing with a powerful and efficient organization. Now he knew that the organization was even more efficient than he had suspected. They took no chances with a prisoner talking. He knew he should have guessed—after the way the man in Berlin had stepped calmly off the roof to his death rather than be caught. And now Varga was at the edge of the roof,

already stepped over, and there was nothing more for the tall man to worry about.

"They'll get you, Shadow," Varga said once more. "No one can win against them. I am proud I was worthy to be a soldier in the organization. Proud!"

Then, as The Shadow watched, Milo Varga's eyes went flat, glazed over. The tall man shuddered once, a violent shudder in the silent blue room, and slowly fell over onto his side. He lay there with his glazed eyes open, his body curled up into a ball. Milo Varga was dead. As suddenly and simply as that. The last word, "Proud!" still hung in the blue haze of the room, and Milo Varga lay quietly dead and beyond any further questioning. The Shadow looked down at the dead man. He felt no pity for Milo Varga. There was no sadness or sympathy in the death of evil. His fiery eyes looked down at the dead man without emotion. No, he cared nothing for the fate of Milo Varga, the world was better for his death, but Varga had not talked! The best lead to the diabolical crimes across the world was gone. The Shadow turned quickly and vanished into the blue light.

Moments later the black-shrouded figure of the secret Avenger appeared in the blue light of another of his complex of secret rooms behind the elegant offices of Lamont Cranston high above New York. His blazing eyes looked down at another dead body. The short man, Anton Menander, lay as dead as Varga. The self-destruct had been removed from Menander, too, and the poison had done its deadly work. The Shadow turned away. He would waste no pity on Menander, either. But all his leads were gone. He knew he was facing a clever organization, a clever force for evil, a powerful enemy for The Shadow. But it was an enemy The Shadow would destroy!

It was now time to send Margo to Paris, to send Lamont Cranston to work on the murder of Patrick McBride.

Margo Lane left the office of Lamont Cranston Enterprises only minutes later. The beautiful woman walked down the hall in plain sight, her long, dark hair shining in the light of the silent night corridor. She took the public elevator down to the lobby. She smiled a quiet goodnight

to the night doorman. In the street she walked to the curb and looked for a taxi. One appeared as if by magic. It pulled up in front of Margo, and the secretary and agent got in. The cab pulled away. The driver watched the rearview mirror. Behind the cab two men came out of the shadows of the building and one of them waved. A grey car appeared. The two men got into the grey car. The car pulled away after the taxi. The taxi driver spoke.

"We've got a tail, Margo."

"All right, Shrevvy," Margo said. "Let them trail us uptown to my apartment. They probably know where I live. I'll use the passage to the next building. Wait ten minutes, and then go to the side entrance of the next building. Pick up Ellen Morgan there."

"Check," Shrevvy said.

The small, peppery driver led the grey car a chase uptown, but not too good a chase. He wanted them to remain close enough to see Margo go into her building. When he stopped and let Margo out, the grey car was less than a block behind. Shrevvy drove away as any cab driver would do, and watched in the rear-view mirror as the grey car stopped a half a block from the building. The two men got out and took up positions from where they could watch the front door. Shrevvy smiled to himself. They had checked the building and found that the only other entrance or exit was the service entrance to the basement that opened on the same street as the main entrance. That would keep them out front. Shrevvy flipped his special switch that shut off his top light and looked at his watch as he cruised around.

In her apartment, Margo went to work at her special dressing table. She deftly thickened her nose and drew down the corners of her mouth. A careful use of eyebrow pencil and eye makeup produced the stern, almost pinched expression of Henry Arnaud's secretary, Ellen Morgan. A special bridge inserted in her mouth heightened the effect of stern efficiency that was the mark of Ellen Morgan. Contact lenses produced the dark, almost black eyes of the Morgan woman. The bridge thinned the lips, and now the face in the mirror bore no resemblance to

Margo Lane. A red wig, and the severe clothes of Ellen Morgan completed the transformation. She put on her glasses, and stood before the mirror to assess her work. Ellen Morgan, severe and humorless, stood where Margo Lane had stood. No one could detect Margo beneath the surface of the far less attractive Ellen Morgan. Satisfied, Ellen Morgan walked out of the bedroom and went to a desk. She drew a small automatic from a hidden drawer, and placed it in a miniature holster strapped to her shapely thigh. She lowered her skirt again and smoothed it down. Not the slightest bulge where the pistol reposed in its holster. She then took another small automatic and placed it in the holster attached to the waist band of her skirt—on the outside but in the small of her back where it could be found. She put on her miniature fire-opal girasol ring, and her ring radio. She checked the small brooch that contained a deadly poison, and the two drop earrings that were smoke bombs.

She picked up her purse and stepped from her living room into her kitchen. There she touched a board in the wall and the refrigerator moved silently away from the wall. She stepped through into the kitchen of another apartment. In this kitchen the refrigerator closed behind her. She walked quickly through Ellen Morgan's apartment and went out into the corridor. She took the service elevator. At the bottom she stepped out. She walked along a narrow concrete corridor and out into the cellar, crossed the cellar to a flight of steps, went up the steps, and came out on the side street. A taxi drove past at that moment. The taxi stopped, Ellen Morgan got in, and the taxi drove off. Shrevvy checked his rear-view mirror. Then he smiled.

"All clear, Margo."

"Good. Idlewild then, Shrevvy," the disguised Margo said.

The taxi drove north and then across the Triborough Bridge and along the Parkways to Idlewild Airport. Neither Margo nor Shrevvy relaxed their vigilance. But nothing happened until they reached the building of Air France. There, Margo in her disguise got out and paid Shrevvy. The peppery little agent indicated that he would be close at hand until her jet left. Margo nodded, and walked into the building. She stood at the departure

desk to wait her turn, and became aware of men watching. Not the same two. These were new men, three of them, and they were watching all exits and entrances. It was clear that they were watching for someone in particular. It was too soon for them to have been alerted by the two who had tailed her from the Park Avenue Building, which meant that the three men were more-or-less permanent stakeouts. When she had her ticket validated, and her boarding instructions, she turned and took a cigarette from her purse. She walked straight up to one of the men she thought was staked-out and smiled at him.

"Do you happen to have a light?"

"Sure," the man said politely. He took out a lighter and gave the disguised Margo a light, but his eyes never looked at her after one quick glance. His eyes continued to look past her at the entrance. Smiling to herself, the disguised Margo thanked the man and walked away. Her disguise was satisfactory, and no one had penetrated it. Also, as she had gotten the light, her keen eyes had detected the bulge of a weapon beneath the coat of the man. She walked to the boarding gate and went through. Behind her the three men still maintained their vigil on all entrances.

The jet taxied away toward the runway. Margo, disguised, had carefully checked all passengers. They seemed a normal group. But the agent would take no chances. Still, it looked clear, and she bent over her ring-radio.

"Agent One to Central. Come in Central."

The ring answered so low no one could hear beyond where Margo sat apparently looking out the window at the lights of Idlewild.

"Burbank here. Report."

"All clear. I was followed to my apartment, two men probably still staked out. The airport is under surveillance. Passengers appear clean."

The voice of The Shadow now spoke softly from the ring radio.

"Very well, Margo. Proceed with caution. Marcel Guyot will place you in contact with Jary Du Neuf. Be careful. I will stand by for any needed help."

"Yes, Chief. Over and out."

Margo, as Ellen Morgan, sat back in her seat. The great jet took off, climbing steeply, and she opened a book to read. Nothing would happen now—not until Paris and Jary Du Neuf.

6

IT WAS just after nine o'clock the next morning when Lamont Cranston walked quietly into the office of Detective Joe Cardona. The swarthy, stocky detective greeted Cranston with a grunt. Cardona did not approve of his Commissioner's policy of allowing Cranston to work on cases, and did not share Weston's faith in the wealthy socialite's ability as a detective. Still, even Cardona had to admit that the cases Cranston worked on had a way of being solved rapidly. He considered this to be sheer luck, but Weston was his boss, and luck was what he needed on the McBride case, so he was not too obviously displeased. He chewed on a thin, black cigar and nodded a grudging welcome to Cranston.

"This looks like one of your specialties, Cranston," Cardona said. "No clues. We know exactly who did it, but we don't know why or who gains. On the surface there's no reason. The Commissioner tells me we're supposed to look for someone or something not even connected to either the killer or the victim! Now there's a switch."

"But important, Cardona," Cranston said. "The Commissioner seems to think this killing is just part of a larger crime. He tells me he had Interpol and the FBI in to discuss it."

Cardona was impressed. It was always Cranston's policy to make it seem that his ideas came from Weston. He did not want Cardona changing his opinion that Cranston was no more than a lucky, and meddling, amateur. In all the years they had worked together, Cardona had never changed his mind, nor connected Cranston with the strange, black-garbed figure who appeared from time

to time. That was the way The Shadow wanted it to remain.

"Okay, then we better go back over to the theater. You ready?"

"Any time you say," Cranston said quietly.

Cardona grunted again, lighted his thin, black cigar, and led the way out to his squad car. They drove uptown to the Pantheon Theater in silence. Cardona sat in the back seat with Cranston, chewing on his cigar and scowling. Cardona liked his cases more simple than this. The two lower-grade detectives in the front seat knew their boss and maintained a discreet silence. When the car reached the theater, Cardona got out without a word and led Cranston and his men inside. A policeman was on guard in the lobby; the patrolman saluted Cardona, and they talked briefly. The patrolman nodded.

"Yes, sir, no one has tried to get in or out. The boys are on every door," the uniformed policeman said.

Cardona grunted and waved Cranston and his two assistants to follow. They entered the dark interior of the theater and walked down the long center aisle to the stage. Cardona and Cranston climbed to the stage. Cardona pointed to a chalked outline on the stage.

"That's where he got it," Cardona said. He pointed out into the empty auditorium. "In front of a full house. We've got a couple of hundred eyewitnesses, not to mention the rest of the cast waiting in the wings—it was near the end of the play—and the whole crew. Now, where do we start looking for some outside influence not connected to either the victim or the killer? The whole audience?"

"That would be impractical," Cranston admitted, and added to himself that that was probably exactly why they had picked an actor. "I doubt if we'll actually find anything, Cardona, but it's worth the look. I suppose nothing has been changed since the murder?"

"Of course not, we're not finished with the investigation. But we'll have to release the theater pretty soon, the owners are bringing pressure on the Mayor, and you know what that means. Of course, *MacBeth* isn't reopening—no *MacBeth*!"

Cardona gave a short, harsh laugh. Cranston barely

heard. He was thinking, his hooded eyes concentrated. Whatever had been used to induce the killers to kill would almost have to have been used some time before the crime. And yet, no, the killer in Berlin, Kurt Pieper, had been admiring the Prince only moments before he killed. The actor who had killed McBride had been on stage, but not for long if Cranston remembered MacBeth correctly. In most cases there had been a crowd of some kind, but not in all cases—the young man in San Francisco, for example. And that young man had been walking alone. He had boarded the cable car alone. The one major similarity in all cases was that the killing or crime happened quickly, suddenly. Some delayed-action device? That was possible, but not likely because there was no evidence in any case that the killer had been forced or lured in any way to the spot of his crime. No, whatever was done, however it was done, happened on the spot and very suddenly. But whatever it was, there had to be some visible action, which made the audience in this theater risky. No, it would more likely be the crew or one of the other actors.

“Was there anything at all you found that didn’t belong, that was unexplained?” Cranston asked.

“Not that I know,” Cardona said.

“Anything unusual that happened?”

“Strictly SOP, according to everyone in the cast and crew,” Cardona said. “Except . . .”

“Except?” Cranston snapped.

“Nothing much. Two of the stagehands didn’t show. The union sent two more.”

“You’re sure, Cardona?”

Cardona looked at Cranston. “No, I’m not sure. I’ll check the union right now.”

When Cardona had gone, Cranston was thoughtful. The socialite began to study the stage. He was working in the dark, without any idea just what had been done to the killers to make them kill. He slowly walked around the stage, searching. He found nothing until he had circled the stage twice, looked in the dressing rooms, checked the lighting board and fly area, and returned to look at the stage once again. He found the small object at the far rear of the

stage, in an area that would have been hidden when the scenery was set in place.

It was a small, round spool. A metal spool, black, of the type that might be used in a miniature wire recorder of an obsolete type. Cranston held the spool and knitted his eyebrows. It was not an object he would have expected to find in a theater. Still, it was possible that it had been used for something in the play. The stage manager would know. He turned to look for Cardona, and saw the stocky detective coming across the stage looking as black as a thundercloud.

"The union never sent anyone! Knew nothing about it!" Cardona snapped. "There's our outsiders, darn it! I've got the stage manager on his way over. What I don't get is if those two new men were ringers, how come the real two haven't blown the whistle?"

"That is probably simple," Cranston said grimly. "Whoever is behind all this will stop at nothing. The two regular men are undoubtedly dead. You'll probably find that they were single men who would not be missed for some time."

"The stage manager can tell us," Cardona said.

And the stage manager told them. The stage manager was a tall, quick man with a small mustache and a bristling temper. He was not pleased at being called to the theater. He did not care how the police worked as long as they left him alone and let him go about his work. He listened impatiently to what Cardona told him, then nodded.

"Yes, the two regulars were both single. They're not around, but they often go off on toots. They follow the races. I expect they'll turn up when they need work."

"What about the two substitutes," Cranston said. "Do you remember where they worked?"

"Remember? Of course I remember! I run a tight stage," the peppery stage manager said. "Let's see. Sure, they worked on the electrical props—they were both electrical men. Then they were up in the flies in the last act, on an overhead follow-spot McBride liked to use for the fight scene."

Cranston looked up. The catwalk high up was directly over the stage. A large follow spot was set on the rail

of the catwalk. And the spot was just about placed directly above where Cranston had found the small metal spool. The socialite took the spool from his pocket and showed it to the stage manager.

"Is this something you know about?" Cranston asked.

The stage manager held the spool. "No, never saw it. Nothing to do with the play. Looks like an old wire recorder spool, too small though. Never saw it before."

Cranston again looked up. Two unidentified men, ringers who had no business in the theater, and a small metal spool. Both connected to the overhead catwalk that gave a full view of the stage where McBride had been murdered. But what could affect a man from that distance that involved something like a wire recorder?

"Can I get back to my work?" the stage manager said.

Cardona scowled. "Any other ideas, Cranston?"

"Only did he notice the two men after the murder?"

The stage manager laughed, snorted. "After? Hell, who saw anything after? The Russian Army could have marched through that pandemonium and never been noticed. But I'll tell you one thing, they didn't do a run-out. When the cops got here I had to report on all my men, and everyone was still here."

"Cool customers, darn them," Cardona said.

"Why not," Cranston said. "They had no connection to either McBride or his killer, and as far as you knew then you had your killer right in hand. You probably asked them their names, if they had seen anything unusual, and let them go."

"That was it," the stage manager said, "and now how about letting me go? I've got a rehearsal."

Cranston nodded and Cardona dismissed the stage manager. Cardona studied the small metal spool. The swarthy detective shook his head.

"What the devil could this have to do with it all, Cranston?"

"I don't know," Cranston said. "But it doesn't belong here, and it could have been dropped from the catwalk up there. Those two men had some purpose."

"And they'll probably never be found. How do we find them now?"

"No, I don't think we can," Cranston said.

"Then what do we do?"

"Talk to the killer again. Perhaps he can remember something that seems unimportant but could give us a clue," Cranston said. "Meanwhile, I'll take this spool to Commissioner Weston, and we'll see if it can tell us anything in the lab."

Cardona grudgingly agreed, and Cranston left. He did not think that Cardona would make any headway with the killer, but he wanted to work alone. There was nothing more that could be done at the theater. In fact, there was nothing more to be learned from the case of McBride at all. It was time for The Shadow to look elsewhere. And as Cranston left the Pantheon he had two thoughts on his mind. First, the pattern of operation of the unknown organization was becoming more and more obvious—always in pairs at least, like any well-trained Army! Second, the metal spool had to be connected, and Cranston wanted to find out if any other spools had been found at any other of the crimes.

Cranston had walked half a block from the theater when he realized he was again being followed. There were, again, two men. As Cranston neared the corner Stanley cruised behind him in the Rolls-Royce. Cranston imperceptibly waved Stanley away. He walked on across town toward the smaller streets of Hell's Kitchen near the river. His mind was working fast. So far he had been unable to learn anything by capturing, or attempting to capture, the men who followed him. For some reason, they seemed to have a special interest in Cranston and his staff. Perhaps it was time to find out just what that interest was. All the time he was thinking, he was walking west toward the river. Stanley and the Rolls-Royce had vanished, but Stanley would not be far away. Cranston made up his mind and continued to walk west to where the small streets were crowded, and where narrow alleys opened off the streets.

He reached a spot less than a block from the river, an area of warehouses and shabby apartments. As he neared a corner, two more men suddenly stepped around the corner in front of him and began to walk casually

toward him. They made an elaborate effort to appear innocent, but they did not fool Cranston. Inside, behind his impassive face and hooded eyes, the socialite smiled. The men were so obvious here in Hell's Kitchen, so out-of-place. Cranston let the men behind him, and the men in front come closer. Then he turned sharply and ducked into an alley. In the alley he began to run—not fast enough to lose his pursuers, but fast enough to make them think that he was really attempting to escape. They appeared in the mouth of the alley behind him. They did not run after him. Instead, they came walking down the alley, slowly, deliberately. There was a sharp curve in the alley. Cranston ran around the curve and saw why they were not hurrying.

A grey car was parked across the exit from the alley. Three men stood beside the grey car. They leaned against the grey car, neither moving nor taking their eyes from Cranston. The socialite looked right and left. He knew this alley well, and he could escape into the building on the left. He could scale the high wall to the right. As Cranston, he had all the secret powers of The Shadow—except one. Cranston possessed the super hearing, the ability to see farther than most men by day or night, the muscular control that permitted his trained body to do anything his mind asked of it. All the powers and secrets learned so long ago in the Orient from the great Chen T'a Tze, all the skills of a lifetime of training—except the ultimate power of The Shadow. The power to cloud men's minds, to render them unable to resist, was a power only The Shadow could employ. The Shadow *as* The Shadow. The power, its source unknown even to the great Master Chen T'a Tze himself, required the great black cloak, the black slouch hat, the fire-opal girasol ring. The power was not in these things, it was of the mind and only The Shadow's mind, but to be used it was necessary for The Shadow to be The Shadow, to wear his secret garb. It was a power possessed by only one man in each generation, and it had been passed to The Shadow by the dying hand of Chen T'a Tze. The Master had chosen The Shadow to carry on the endless battle against evil, and The Shadow had not betrayed

that trust. But this ultimate power belonged only to The Shadow, not to Lamont Cranston.

The socialite, trapped now in the alley, would have to escape by the other skills—or not escape. Because he had made up his mind that this time he would not escape. This time he would be captured. Whatever the evil force that was behind these crimes all across the world, it had to be stopped, and stopped quickly. There was some plot in the wind, some plan, and The Shadow must destroy that plan. To do this he had to know who and what he was fighting. In time he would learn what he had to know, but there might not be time. The organization behind all the strange crimes was strong and clever, and Cranston sensed there was little time. No, The Shadow would walk into the lion's den! Let them take him in and destroy themselves! But his capture had to be convincing. They were not fools, they would know if he did not fight. So now, in the silent alley in broad daylight, Cranston looked ahead to where the three men waited at the grey car, and behind to where the four others now came around the curve in the alley.

They moved toward him.

The three ahead left the grey car and began to move in. The four behind drew their guns. None spoke, said a word, or made a sound. In the alley there was only their footfalls on the stones. Cranston watched them from behind his hooded, impassive eyes. He knew the risk. They might shoot. Perhaps they did not have orders to take him alive. It was a risk he had to take, and he watched the seven men carefully, watched their eyes for the tell-tale signs of what they would do. He saw in their eyes that they would not shoot. It was clear in their eyes that they had orders to take him alive. With his powers he could escape them, and he had to be ready to pretend to succumb to whatever method of capture they might use.

They came closer, still without a word, grim and silent.

Cranston suddenly whirled and ran for the door into the building to his left.

Two of the men fired, the bullets striking the stones just in front of Cranston, whining away down the alley.

Cranston drew his automatic and returned the fire, whirled again and ran for the wall to the right. Four of the men broke into runs to cut him off. He fired, hit one man, who went down cursing now and clutching his shoulder. All of them were shouting now, afraid the sound of the shots would bring help for Cranston. One of them who stood back seemed to be the leader.

"Get him!" the leader snarled.

Cranston clawed at the high wall as if frantically trying to climb. He dropped down and shot another one of them.

"Stop him!" the leader cried.

They were on him. Cranston clubbed with his automatic. They swarmed over him. He struggled in silence, knocked one to the ground. Then they bore him down with the weight of numbers and the leader walked forward. Cranston lay on the ground, held down, and glared up at the leader.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Cranston said, pretending fear and anger.

"That doesn't matter, Mr. Cranston," the leader said.

Cranston shouted for help, struggled, but behind the facade of fear his mind was calm, he had learned that they knew who he was and that it was Cranston they wanted. He continued to struggle, and watched the leader. The leader suddenly bent and touched his neck. He felt a tiny pin prick. A drug coursed through his body. He felt the drug and knew at once that it was a special paralytic drug. The resistance of his powerful body gathered and threw off the effects of the drug that would paralyze any normal man for hours, render a normal man unconscious instantly.

The leader stepped back smiling down, watched Cranston.

Cranston concentrated his mind, and in an instant had gone into the self-induced trance state that simulated all the effects of the drug. The leader watched, nodded.

"All right, pick him up," the leader said. "Quick now! The shots and yelling will bring someone soon."

They picked Cranston up and carried him to the grey car. They dropped him into the back seat and propped him up. He sat there, rigid and paralyzed, his eyes open. His wide open eyes should have seen nothing.

But Cranston, beneath the trance state, saw and heard all that happened as the grey car drove out of the alley and started across town. He was aware of the whole trip across the bridge into Brooklyn and across Brooklyn to the desolate wastes of Jamaica Bay. He was aware of the open space of water and tall bullrushes. He watched carefully. They took him from the car and carried him to a small power boat. The boat roared away out into the choppy water of the Bay. Ahead there was a long barge. The boat headed straight for the barge. He saw men waiting for him on the innocent-seeming barge. Cranston's keen eyes saw that what looked like a dilapidated short mast on the barge was actually a disguised high-power radio antenna! The barge was more than it seemed—it was a headquarters of the organization. In a matter of minutes, he would know who he was fighting.

7

CYPHER!

Cranston lay on the long table, to anyone else a totally paralyzed and unconscious victim. He listened, and he knew who was behind all the strange crimes across the world. CYPHER!

The socialite remembered CYPHER only too well, the secret organization whose only purpose was ruthless, efficient service—service to anyone who needed murder, robbery, the disposal of bodies, even a small army to fight anyone anywhere for money. A vast international agency of murder and robbery, available to any evil purpose that would pay them. Ruthless, and organized as efficiently as the best agency ever conceived—an agency of death and destruction.

Cranston remembered CYPHER, and CYPHER remembered Cranston. Where he lay on the table, strapped down, he watched and listened. He had been carried down into the barge the instant he was lifted aboard, and strapped onto the table. The men who had captured him had turned him over, saluted, and gone. The table was

in a room that did not belong on any barge—a soundproof room crammed with instruments, hidden in the bowels of the innocent barge. All the instruments were marked with the white circle of CYPHER. On the wall was the flag with the simple white circle in the center—the standard of CYPHER. The men who worked in the room all wore the slim black coverall uniform of CYPHER, with the white circle insignia on the breast. Men with the faces of many nations, the insignia of many nations on their black uniforms. For CYPHER was composed of the dissatisfied and the disgruntled of many nations; the misfits and the killers from all countries; the soldiers who had turned their backs on their countries, but who were proud of their skills as soldiers, and so wore their former insignia. Men who for a hundred reasons were opposed to the world as it was, opposed to what had happened to them and their armies: ex-Frenchmen who hated the lost glory of France and the loss of Algeria; ex-Germans who had not accepted defeat; ex-Russian soldiers who no longer believed in their country or their goals; ex-British soldiers who could not accept peace; former colonial officers from many countries who hated the freedom of their former colonies; ex-American soldiers who hated what they considered the softness of their country and its goals; former Israeli killer-commandoes who could not live without death. The misfit soldiers of the world who dreamed of glory and money and power and who felt lost without discipline and a gun in their hands, who joined with CYPHER to try to stop the progress of the world. An organization with no beliefs beyond money and power, as disciplined and efficient as it was without any principle but money and power!

An organization Lamont Cranston, and The Shadow, had met once before, and it had been The Shadow who had won, and CYPHER remembered. CYPHER wanted Lamont Cranston, and now they had him! In the hidden room of the innocent barge, the black-uniformed soldiers worked, and the leaders stood above the table and looked down at Cranston. There were three leaders. A woman and two men. The woman wore the black uniform and some rank Cranston did not recognize. She also wore

the insignia of a Yugoslav Partisan Unit. It was the woman who had met the men with Cranston on the deck of the barge and had him brought down to the table. It was the woman who now held another hypodermic syringe and watched the two men for her orders. A dazzlingly beautiful woman but with eyes as cold as a snowcap. Cold blue eyes as flat as steel, in a face that could have belonged to a goddess, and all framed by long, dark hair. But she was not a woman, she was a soldier, and she held the syringe and awaited her orders, looking down at Cranston from time to time as if she were looking at a slab of dead meat. She stood in silence and watched the bigger of the two men.

The bigger man wore the same black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER, and the rank that Cranston knew was that of Group Leader. He was a tall, broad soldier of quick movements, and he wore the insignia of the Waffen SS on his collar. His manner was clipped and Prussian. He looked down at Cranston only once. He spoke to the third leader, the smaller man.

"We found the spool in his pocket. I think he comes close to knowing, yes?" the Group Leader said.

"I think not, Group Leader 15," the smaller man said.

It was at this smaller man that Cranston looked from under his self-induced state of trance. The man did not wear the black uniform with the white circle over the breast. He wore instead a grey tunic and slim blue trousers. The circle of CYPHER on his chest was not white but gold. He wore the ribbons of the medals of many countries, and the old insignia on his uniform was what Cranston recognized as the mark of a crack Soviet Armored Command. His rank, on the shoulder straps of the grey tunic was unfamiliar to Cranston, but he sensed that he was seeing a high leader of CYPHER for the first time.

"I think he knows nothing about the presentation," the small man said. "But he is Lamont Cranston, and he has caused us a certain loss of revenue."

Behind his induced trance, Cranston watched the small man. There was something odd, strange, even macabre

about the little man in the grey tunic with the gold circle of CYPHER. The voice was thin and yet cool, very cool, like the voice of a man talking not of life and death but of some uninteresting routine duty. A cool voice with an edge of mania, a hint of madness. A flat, cold voice that could have come from some robot, a mechanical man. But it was not the voice. It was the face! Cranston watched and saw that the face did not move! The small man spoke, his hand gestured briefly, his shoulders moved faintly, but his lips and face did not move at all. As if the face were totally paralyzed. But that was not it. The face was not paralyzed. No, there was no face! It was a plastic face, a rigid face made of plastic! A mask and yet not a mask—as if the man had no face at all but only a fabricated face of plastic and metal. Yet the eyes moved, were alert. Then Cranston realized that the face of the small man was constructed, built up on his own bones of some rigid plastic. It could mean only that the face of the small man had been destroyed at some time, leaving him with the macabre construction of rigid plastic where there had been skin and flesh.

“No,” the small man said. “He knows nothing of the current presentation. It is the matter of Client 407-AB I want to discuss with him.”

“And the man in black,” the woman said. “Don’t forget the man in black, Section Director!”

The small man nodded his rigid face. “Ah, yes, the man in black. There does seem to be a connection between them. Yes, he will tell us about the man in black.”

“He will tell us very quickly,” the big man who was called Group Leader 15 said.

“Still, we must not forget that our primary target is the presentation. That must go off smoothly,” the small Section Director said.

“Smooth as silk, sir,” the woman said. “As client man on the brochure I can report high contact interest. My survey shows at least ninety-seven percent affirmative interest on potential users contacted.”

“We just run it up the flagpole and they all salute,” the Group Leader said.

"Excellent," the small Section Director said. "Development Section will be more than pleased. I should say we are ready for the kickoff on schedule. The brochure was well-prepared. Now I will launch the boat and see where it ties up. It should prove a most profitable bonus revenue."

The small Section Director with the rigid plastic face looked at his watch. "He should be coming out of it soon. Are we all in order, Senior Trooper?"

"All in order," the woman, the Senior Trooper, said. "If he proves recalcitrant I have the team ready."

"Excellent," the Section Director said. "You run a good Group here, Group Leader 15."

"Thank you, Section Director," the bigger man who wore the insignia of the Waffen SS said.

On the table, Cranston groaned and moved weakly. The socialite pretended to be coming out of the drugged paralytic state. He began to blink, move his lips. He tried to rise as if unaware that he was strapped down. He felt the straps and began to strain weakly against them. His eyes blinked rapidly and he tried to look around him. Then he let a look of startled fear come into his eyes. All the time he was pretending to revive, his muscles were testing the straps. They were strong straps, but not strong enough to hold him when he decided to break loose. His eyes fully clear, he saw the straps, lay back, and stared in puzzled fear at the three faces above him. He licked his lips.

"Who . . . who are you? Where . . ."

"Relax, if you please, Mr. Cranston," the Section Director with the rigid face said. "It is useless to struggle. Now I want you to answer a few simple questions."

Cranston shook his head as if still groggy. "Questions? I don't . . ."

The rigid-faced small man cut him off. "Please, no games, Mr. Cranston. I have much too much work to do. I have many accounts to supervise, there is little time. You are of no importance, really. A gadfly. However, I am curious about the Santa Carla affair. I'm afraid you had something to do with that."

"Santa Carla?" Cranston said slowly as if trying to make his drugged mind think.

"Santa Carla. The account was a failure, most annoying. You recall it? Walter Bailey, the Mafia?"

Cranston nodded. "I remember it. Bailey was trying to take over the state, he had some . . . help."

"He was a client, yes. We do not like to lose clients, gives us a poor rating. Our absolute efficiency is our strength, a failure costs us a great deal of billing," the Section Director said.

"I didn't have . . ." Cranston began.

"Of course you didn't do it," the small man said, his rigid face moving as if he wanted to smile, but the plastic could not smile. "However, you had some involvement. As I read the report, you and your secretary were prisoners. A man in black rescued you, killed one of our best Area Leaders and our most promising Group Leader. To say nothing of spoiling the campaign for the client. It was, I must admit, the only unsuccessful campaign we have had. We do not like to lose the campaign, the contract, the client, our best Group Leader, a top Area Leader, and an entire system of body removal! No, I want to know about that man in black."

Cranston shook his head. "I . . . don't know. I . . . we were rescued, that's all I know."

"Come, come! The man in black has turned up again in our way. Your secretary is most interested in the death of Patrick McBride. Now we know there is some connection between you and the man in black. You will please tell us."

But Cranston looked at the three people instead of answering the question. Pinioned to the table, he could move only his head. He nodded his head toward the small Section Director with the rigid face.

"How does it happen that a Yugoslav Partisan, an SS man, and a Soviet Armored Command soldier are all together?"

The small Section Director knitted his eyebrows, watched the wealthy socialite closely. "You appear to know a great deal about military insignia, Mr. Cranston. Perhaps I

underestimate your role? Possibly you are CIA or MI-5? Yes, that would explain much."

The plastic-faced man touched his face, the rigid shell that was now his face. "So you know my old regiment? A great unit, yes! I was a Colonel, Cranston, you hear? That unit, my country, was my life. But my country went soft, my unit was reduced in strength, and my life was living without a face!" Again the small man touched his plastic shell of a face. "I was burned by American napalm in Korea, on detached duty. I do not blame the Americans, why should I? They did their job, as I hoped to do mine. But they went soft, the fools who lead my country. So I found CYPHER!"

"An agency of killers!" Cranston said.

The small man laughed his almost hysterical laugh. "More, Mr. Cranston, much more! To kill is easy, but to kill totally, anonymously, efficiently, without a trace, *ah* that takes art! To kill is the simplest part of our service. There are all our other services, our research, our product development. As the Nazi's learned, to kill millions is simple, the problem is disposing of all those bodies! Logistics, that is our *forte*! We are an agency of skilled practitioners of all the arts of crime and profit!"

"An agency of evil," Cranston said softly where he lay strapped down. "Of insane evil!"

"Insane, Mr. Cranston? No, not insane. Perhaps you would like to think we were insane, but we are only too sane. Our respective nations did not value our services, our skills. They did not pay attention to what we wanted, what we know to be true. The fools! Everywhere the world is being ruled by fools who do not understand that only force can count. They do not want to face the truth, the truth about mankind. Men are animals, Cranston, and we should not try to be more. All our troubles come from trying to be more than we are. Win and profit, that is the rule of life. Take what you want, kill your opponent, that is the only rule of life. That is what we were all trained to do, but our soft countries betrayed us. We could have made them all strong and rich and happy, but they chose to play the stupid games of weaklings. So we have banded together to offer our

services to anyone who has the honesty and intelligence to use us. We are professionals, we do our work for profit, and that is our strength. We leave the reasons to others."

"Insane," Cranston said softly, insistently. "And those who hire you are insane."

"Perhaps some of them," the small Section Director said. "But men will kill. Kill and be killed, that is the rule of life. We offer the service of efficiency and skill, of minimum risk to the killer. A simple matter of supply and demand. There is a market for our services, so we prosper. Who will stop us? The weaklings who cannot even save their own self-interests? No, we are too efficient, too detached from personal involvement. With our research and development we continue to create further markets. At this moment we have . . ." The man with the plastic face stopped. The rigid face looked at Cranston. There could have been a smile beneath the smooth plastic. "You make me talk, eh? Ah, but we all have our weaknesses. I have talked enough. Now you will talk. You will tell me about this man in black."

"No," Cranston said. "There are some things even you cannot do."

The rigid face merely looked at Cranston. "We shall see."

The Section Director nodded to the woman. "Proceed, Senior Trooper. Come, Group Leader 15."

The small man turned and left the room accompanied by the big Group Leader. On the table, Cranston lay and watched the woman Senior Trooper. They were like children playing soldier, these people of CYPHER. Deadly children. They took delight in their ranks and their discipline—the need for rule and discipline deep inside mankind, the desire to be guided and ruled that made wars, and now made a super fraternal organization of killers. They had found where they belonged, and they reveled in their place within. Their secure place where there were no decision to be made, only orders to be followed. Their goal not truth and true happiness, but only order and peace inside their fearful minds!

The woman spoke into an intercom system. "Team Seven, report to central operations immediately."

She turned to Cranston, looked down at him with eyes that were neither angry nor pleased, neutral eyes. "There is still time to answer the Section Director's question, Mr. Cranston. It would be advisable. You will tell us eventually. You can save yourself much pain, and save us much time. That is a simple bargain. We have no interest in inflicting pain for its own sake, you understand? Results, that is all that counts in CYPHER. Tell us now, and you will die quickly. You will die, of course, but you can choose the less unpleasant way."

"We will all die," Cranston said. "The hard part is to live. Don't you care to live? Are you afraid?"

"Spare me the sophist philosophy," the woman said. "I am a soldier. To live, a soldier must have an army. It is that simple."

"Yes," Cranston said from behind his impassive face. "It is that simple."

The woman watched him for a long minute, then she turned and picked up her hypodermic syringe. She bent over Cranston and plunged the needle into his arm. She wiped the syringe and carefully replaced it in its sterilizer. Then she looked down at Cranston, her face as impassive as the face of the socialite.

"A pain heightener," the woman said quietly, clinically. "It will intensify the pain, in case you have been trained to resist normal pain. It is the only artificial method we use. We have found that, strangely enough, the older methods of torture are by far the most efficient. We use no laser beams or electronic machines. Simplicity, that is the watchword of the Torture Group. Research has proven them correct."

"Don't you miss Yugoslavia? Perhaps a man?" Cranston said.

"My dear Mr. Cranston, there was no profit for me in Yugoslavia. No advancement. As for men, there are excellent men in CYPHER. I have two, both very good. I have the money to buy any more I wish outside CYPHER. Any further questions, Mr. Cranston?"

"Not now," Cranston said.

He was watching the four men who had just entered the room. They wore the black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER. Two were Chinese, one was Negro and wore the old insignia of the Spanish Moroccan Units, and the fourth was a small Caucasian who wore the insignia of the Gestapo. The woman Senior Trooper nodded to them.

"You know the basic questions we need to have answered. The Section Director expects quick results. The subject has been prepared. Report when you are ready."

"Yes, Senior Trooper," the tallest Chinese said.

The woman left. The four men turned to Cranston. The Negro began to remove the socialite's shoes.

8

TWO HOURS had passed.

The hidden room on the barge had not changed. The silent room crammed with the cold and efficient instruments of a modern electronic army. Nothing had changed. There had been no sounds but the slow, sure movements of the four men and the screams and moans of Lamont Cranston. The hiss of flame, the faint squeak of metal threads turning in the modernized Chinese boot, the dull sound of blows struck against flesh.

Two hours that no man could have stood—except Lamont Cranston. No man but an alter-ego of The Shadow, or The Shadow himself, could have still been on the table alive, awake—and silent. No other man could have remained silent under the hands of the four men who knew all there was to know about the ancient and honored art of inflicting pain on their fellow men. Each man had his own touch. The tall Chinese was the practitioner of all the ancient Chinese tortures. The Gestapo man was the expert of blows struck where they would do the most internal damage, cause the most pain with the least mark on the skin. The Negro ex-Moroccan was the instrument of the subtle pains, the indignities, the

pins to the sensitive areas, the small whip. The second Chinese was cruder, the man with the flame that burned.

Two hours—and Cranston still lay on the table, his mind as clear and alert as ever. He was waiting for the proper time to strike back. Two hours—and he felt no pain. Discomfort, yes, and the pain-intensifying drug had some small effect, but through it all his mind remained clear and alert. The power of The Shadow! The power of the great Master Chen T'a Tze, and there were moments as he lay on the table that Cranston's mind seemed to go back to those days so long ago in the Orient. Those long, endless days under the stern tutelage of Chen T'a Tze, learning the secret of raising his body to a threshold of pain so high no pain could reach him. The years of concentration and exercise under the eyes of the Master to make his muscles so strong, so responsive to his mind, that no blows could damage his organs, no fire burn more than the surface of his skin, while all the time none of this muscular power showed on the surface. On the table, as the small pains reached faintly into his mind under the expert hands of these creatures who were said to be human, he saw again those empty rooms where a young man, himself, sat for days, weeks, and stared at nothing, concentrated until every pore of his body, every hair, was under the control of his mind and will. He saw that young man who suffered, worked, studied, learned for all those years to prepare for his life work—as The Shadow!

He saw this, and his mind concentrated, his body responded, and he lay alert and ready, untouched except where it did not matter. He moaned and screamed, because they must not know of his power, or that his mind could defeat any pain they could inflict. He cried and groaned, writhed against the straps, bit his lip to make small blood flow. His screams echoed horribly through the soundproofed room. The four men neither smiled nor reacted in any way. They did their work coldly and efficiently. To them his screams were nothing more than guides for their work, signs of progress. For two hours the four men continued working, apparently satisfied with the number of screams. Then the tall Chinese began to

frown. Each man in turn went to work on Cranston. His screams and groans increased. But the tall Chinese stood back and watched. He was a patient man, as befitted his work, a credit to the endless line of men of torture down the ages. He did not wear the traditional black hood—men no longer were ashamed of this work, ashamed to walk the streets and be recognized. Man, in the form of the tall Chinese, had come a long way down the road of admitting what he was. But the tall Chinese was not happy. First he frowned as he watched, then he began to rub his gaunt chin. At the end of the second hour the tall Chinese turned abruptly and walked to the intercom. He pressed a button.

The voice of the plastic-faced Section Director answered at once. "Yes? You have the answers?"

"No, sir," the tall Chinese said.

There was a silence.

"He is resisting successfully?" the voice said at last, an edge of surprise in the voice.

"I don't know, sir. He seems in great enough pain. The level of response is about normal. But he has not talked. I do not understand it. I can recall only one case that lasted over two hours. The 'M'Bondo account, if you recall. The subject did not talk, and did not die for two hours and fourteen minutes."

Again there was a silence. The voice was cold and harsh when it spoke again.

"Your report is impossible, Trooper. You must be below normal operating efficiency. Proceed, and do not call me again until you have results!"

"Yes, sir!"

Furious at the rebuke, the tall Chinese turned back to Cranston with a scowl on his lean face that was the first sign that the tall Chinese was losing his detached expertness. With an angry gesture, the Chinese moved the other three back away from the table. He picked up a strange-looking instrument. In his hands the odd instrument looked like a wooden hat with two large ears—a hat that came down low. The Chinese stepped to Cranston carrying what the socialite recognized at once as an ancient Chinese instrument brought up to date. He knew its

purpose—and knew that even his powers could only withstand so much. But it was time anyway. The Chinese was angry, he would become careless. The Section Director had given the order not to call again without results—so Cranston would have uninterrupted time. It was time. He closed his eyes and brought all his power into concentration as the tall Chinese fitted the wooden hat over his head with his temples covered.

“Once more, who is the man in black?” the tall Chinese said.

“You’ll never know,” Cranston said, whispered as if on the edge of collapse, and yet with a certain mockery in his voice intended to infuriate the tall Chinese.

“I will know!” the Chinese said.

Cranston felt the projecting screws begin to tighten the wooden hat over his temples. The pain he could resist, but even The Shadow was not proof against death, and the screws would, eventually, crush his skull. He concentrated behind his closed eyes, and at the same time writhed and screamed.

“Who is the man in black?”

“No!” Cranston cried between clenched teeth.

“What is his connection to you?”

“I . . . don’t . . . know . . . him . . . ”

The wooden hat tightened. Cranston concentrated. He was ready, but he had to pick the exact moment.

“Tell us about the man in black!”

Cranston screamed. Behind his closed eyes he was calm, ready.

“Tell me!”

The screw tightened.

“Tell me, you fool!”

The screw tightened again. Cranston felt his temple bones begin to bend. The former Gestapo man spoke.

“Not much more, Trooper Chang!”

The tall Chinese did not even look. “Mind your business!” And to Cranston. “You will talk, damn you!”

Cranston felt the screw begin to turn once more. It was the time!

Cranston suddenly shuddered, twisted on the table, gave a choked, strangled cry that ended in a rattle and silence.

His body strained against the bonds, his eyes opened, and he went limp. His open eyes stared up. His heart stopped. He lay still and staring at nothing.

The tall Chinese stepped back, stared, said, "Cranston?"

Lamont Cranston lay dead.

"You fool!" the Gestapo man said.

To anyone else, Cranston lay dead. But he was not dead. The socialite was not even unconscious. He lay in the state of trance that was his second greatest power—a state where his heart seemed to stop, his breathing seemed to stop, his body grew cold. By any known method of detection, Cranston was dead. But he breathed, slow and shallow, and his heart beat, slow and almost silent. In this state not only did he seem dead, but he could live beneath the earth or beneath the water for hours without more air than was in a coffin. It had served him well, this trance learned from Chen T'a Tze, and it would now serve him again. The four men quickly bent over him, removed the straps that held him to the table. They listened to his heart. One began artificial respiration. The Negro brought a hypodermic syringe with a heart stimulant in it. Nothing worked. The four men stepped back. The tall Chinese was as pale as death itself.

"You've killed him!" the Gestapo man said.

"And he did not talk," the Negro said.

"Too much!" the second Chinese said. "Too much!"

"You lost your head, Chang!" the Negro said.

"The Section Director will be furious!" the Gestapo man said.

The tall Chinese was pale, but he tried to shrug it off. He turned and walked toward the intercom.

"We have lost subjects before. I will report."

The other three all turned to look at the tall Chinese. The tall man, Chang, pressed the button on the intercom. There was a pause this time. Then the voice of the plastic-faced Section Director came on. The voice was calm and confident. The Section Director was accustomed to having his orders obeyed. If the tall Chinese were reporting, then there had to be results.

"Yes, Trooper? Tell me who the man in black is!" the voice said eagerly.

The voice of the tall Chinese was flat, official, trying hard to keep from shaking.

"Report, sir, that subject Cranston is dead. Subject died . . ."

"Dead!"

The word was like a shot, a vicious and short explosion like a bullet firing.

"Dead?!"

"Yes, sir. Cranston died on the table under the operation. I regret . . ."

"He did not talk?" the voice of the Section Director snapped.

"No sir. His heart . . ."

"You went too far?"

"I think not, sir. His heart must have been weaker than we . . ."

"Of course it was! You are not supposed to kill subjects, Trooper! You are supposed to know when they might die! I am most annoyed, Trooper! Most annoyed!"

"Yes, sir," Chang said into the intercom.

There was a long silence. In the room they waited. On the table Cranston waited. The intercom had to be switched off before he made his move. Finally, the voice of the Section Director spoke again. It was a cold, detached, but smooth voice now.

"All right. Get rid of him. I will have to make a poor report, but no more. Cranston was incidental, no more. I expect we will learn about the man in black. We have wasted time, that is the worst part. We must return to full work on the presentation. Get rid of the body in the usual manner and report to me."

The intercom clicked off at the other end. The tall Chinese heaved a slow sigh of relief. The others relaxed. They all stood and watched Chang switch off the intercom at his end. For that instant no one was looking at Cranston.

Cranston moved.

He was off the table in an instant. With each hand he chopped killing blows to the necks of the smaller Chinese and the Gestapo man. The smaller Chinese went down without a sound, his neck snapped instantly by the force of the *karate* blow. The Gestapo man turned

a hair as Cranston struck. The Gestapo man went down but he was not dead.

The Negro Moroccan half-turned to meet Cranston. The heel of Cranston's hand caught him beneath the chin. The Negro's neck snapped with a sickening sound and he dropped dead to the floor.

The tall Chinese would have had a second to prepare, but when he turned and saw Cranston—alive and on his feet—the instant of shock paralyzed him. It cost him his life. Cranston struck the point of his hand into the solar plexus of the Chinese, and chopped his exposed neck as the Chinese doubled over.

Behind Cranston the Gestapo man moaned and half rose to his feet. Cranston broke his neck with a single blow. The Gestapo man sprawled dead.

The room was silent.

No more than ten seconds had passed. In the room the four bodies lay where they had died without a sound or a word. Cranston looked carefully around. He quickly searched the hidden and silent room. There was nothing in this room but the electronic equipment. Somewhere there was another room where the Section Director, and the information he wanted about CYPHER, would be. He had to find where that room was, and he had to find it fast and unseen. But it would not be Cranston who found it. Cranston was dead. It would be The Shadow.

Quickly, Cranston took the black cape, the black slouch hat, and the fire-opal girasol ring from their secret pockets inside his clothes. Moments later Cranston was no longer in the room. In his place there stood the tall, hawklike, fiery-eyed black shape of The Shadow. His eerie laugh echoed once as he looked at the four dead torturers. Then he seemed to vanish into the shadows of the room. The room became even more silent. The door out of the room seemed to open and close as if by itself. No one could have seen the vague shadow that flitted for a moment in the doorway and was gone.

In the narrow, low corridor of the barge nothing moved. It was dark in the corridor. There were shadows, and the shadows now seemed to move. The shadows themselves seeming to undulate along the corridor toward an open

door at the end where there was light. For an instant, the light flickered, was blocked, and then it reappeared again. Beyond the door there was a room lighted by sunlight from above through a skylight and an open hatchway. In this room three men in black uniforms with the circle of CYPHER white on their breasts sat at their ease with their submachineguns across their laps. They did not see the tall, black figure that glided from the corridor until it was too late. Only one of them managed to rise from his seat and attempt to use his gun. The fiery eyes of The Shadow blazed. The power of his mind, the ultimate power to cloud the minds of all men, reached out and held them. Two closed their eyes and seemed to sleep. The third, the one who had managed to rise to his feet, blinked, rubbed his eyes, stared at the looming shape of The Shadow. He tried to raise his weapon, but it would not move. The blazing eyes of The Shadow burned as his power reached out to hold the mind of the black-uniformed CYPHER man. The man lowered his weapon, stood staring straight at The Shadow.

"Where is the Section Director?" The Shadow intoned.

"With Group Leader Fifteen," the man answered promptly as if answering his superiors. There was some advantage to dealing with a member of a disciplined army.

"Where is the Group Leader?"

"In his office, forward," the man said.

"Explain how to reach the office of the Group Leader!"

"Go up this companionway, walk forward to the second hatchway down, the Group Leader's office is the second door of the first corridor."

"Very good," The Shadow said. "You will now sit down and let no one in or out."

"Yes sir!"

The black-uniformed soldier sat down and his eyes closed. In an instant he was asleep with his two companions. They would remain in the sleep state for at least an hour. The Shadow turned and floated silently up the gangway into the afternoon sunlight of Jamaica Bay. The deck of the barge was deserted. CYPHER took no chances. The barge was disguised as an abandoned derelict half

sunk in the mud of a tidal flat like so many other abandoned hulks in the salt marshes of the city. They took no chances with anyone being seen on the deck. Beyond the disguised radio antennae, there was nothing on the open deck of the barge that should not have been there.

Until now.

Now the quick, flitting black shape of The Shadow moved in the bright sun along the deck toward the second hatchway. His sharp glance searched the placid water of the bay that shone in the sun like a mirror. In the distance some fishing boats moved out beneath the Jacob Riis Bridge toward the open sea. On the flat expanse of Rockaway cars moved, and smaller boats plied up and down the sunny and sandy shore. But there was nothing near the barge. It was the Shadow against those who were on the barge. And those who were on the barge did not know that they had to face The Shadow.

The instant he thought this, and smiled, he learned that he was wrong. CYPHER was a careful adversary.

Heads appeared forward beyond the hatchway. Heads, and then the black uniforms, and the weapons that opened fire. The Shadow took cover behind a deckhouse. There were no guards on deck, but somehow they had the deck under scrutiny. The sharp eyes of The Shadow studied the deck in front of him. He saw the small, round eyes of the television cameras. There were two, one at each end of the barge. The Shadow watched them move like the antennae of insects as they searched the deck for him. Behind the camera at the bow, three black-uniformed men came over the hatchways and ran at The Shadow.

His automatics out, one in each hand, The Shadow laid down a withering fire. All three CYPHER soldiers fell to the deck. One screamed and skidded overboard. Somewhere behind The Shadow an alarm was ringing. But no one answered the alarm. The soldiers in the stern were still silent under the power of The Shadow. Now The Shadow moved forward again along the silent deck. Four more CYPHER soldiers appeared far forward, coming from some distant hatchway. They came more cautiously now, and The Shadow waited for them in

the cover of the companionway down to the office of the Group Leader. They moved close but did not attack yet, using all the cover the littered deck of the old barge afforded. The Shadow raised his automatics and carefully shot out both TV cameras. There was a sound of movement below as the watchers were now blind. The four men on deck were on their own.

The chilling laugh of The Shadow drifted out across the water in the sun.

The four men moved closer. The Shadow raised up, fired a volley to keep them down, and then brought the power of his mind to bear on his four hidden antagonists. The fingers of his brain reached out in the sun, the power to cloud men's minds rolling out like an invisible fog that misted the brains of the four men. Crouched, waiting for The Shadow to reveal himself, neither moving nor firing now, they felt the power reach into them and hold them in its grip. Unaware of what was happening, immobile and unable to resist, they rubbed their eyes, shook their heads to escape the power. They could not. Only one of them became, suddenly, aware that some power was taking hold of his mind. This single soldier jumped up, battling the cloud that covered his mind, sapped all his strength to resist, and began to run toward the hidden Shadow, firing as he ran. His shots went wild in his panic. Coolly, The Shadow shot him down. He skidded across the deck and lay still.

The Shadow's laugh was mocking in the sun.

The other three suddenly stood up at a soundless command from The Shadow's mind. They laid down their weapons and stood there as if transfixed. They would not move for hours, and The Shadow wasted no more time on them. He glided down the companionway into the dark corridor of the barge. The second door of the first corridor was the office of Group Leader Fifteen. The Shadow moved soundlessly along the silent corridor to the door. His automatics ready, he pushed open the door and leaped inside.

The room was empty. The two dark television monitor screens stood like blinded animals in the instrument panel that covered a wall of the room. As he studied

the panel, there was a sound behind him. The Avenger whirled. A steel panel slid across the open doorway as the fiery eyes of the black-shrouded figure watched. A red light glowed on an instrument panel in the room. Somewhere close by the engine of a boat started. Quickly, The Shadow moved across the office to the steel panel intended to trap him in the small cabin. He stared at the door with his fiery eyes. The powers of his mind concentrated and sent out a stream of power. The steel panel began to shudder. Suddenly it slid open as silently as it had closed, the mechanism activated by the power of the mind of The Shadow that could affect any electric system, could activate or deactivate any electric circuit.

His great black shape floated through the door and to the rear of the barge. The sound of the motorboat began to move away. He found a narrow passage that led to the stern. Moments later he stood in a large hidden docking area. The whole stern of the barge was a dock hidden by the deck above. A hidden space of water inside the barge, and the side wall was now open to the Bay, and already a small motorboat was five hundred yards away. In the boat the three CYPHER leaders stood and looked back at the barge. The Shadow kneeled, took careful aim with one of his automatics in both hands, and fired three slow shots. The woman and the Group Leader fell to the deck on the motorboat, not hit but taking cover. The Section Director with the rigid face of plastic did not move, did not flinch, but stood staring back at the black-shrouded shape of The Shadow. The range was too great even for The Shadow, and the plastic-faced CYPHER leader knew it. The rigid face shined in reflected sun, stared back as if to remember The Shadow.

Or as if waiting!

The Shadow turned, glided back along the corridor, up the companionway, and onto the open deck on the side away from the motorboat that still moved away from the barge. For a long moment The Shadow watched the motorboat from where he crouched hidden. The three men still stood on the deck, their minds clouded, waiting for The Shadow to tell them what to do. Then The

Shadow saw the motorboat stop. It was time. The Shadow dropped overboard like a great bird of prey in the sun, but hidden from the view of the motorboat. Under the water he swam swiftly for a hundred feet, and surfaced. The power of his mind reached out and released the black-uniformed soldiers on the barge. The Shadow would give them a chance. But they did not take their chance. The instant they were released, all six of them, they ran to the rail and began to fire at the black-shrouded head of The Shadow out in the water. The Shadow submerged, concentrated on his shallow breathing, and came up far out of range. He looked back at the silent barge.

Then the barge blew up in a sheet of flame and smoke.

The explosion reverberated far across the water of the placid bay. The shock wave reached out far across the water that shined in the sun.

Then there was silence.

The men on the barge were gone.

The barge itself lay a smoking hulk in the water, flames licking, burning it to the waterline.

Far out the motorboat sat motionless in the water. There was the sound of an aircraft. A small amphibian plane came into sight and swooped low to land near the motorboat.

The Shadow stroked slowly, submerged in the water, and watched the amphibian land, take the CYPHER leaders aboard, and take off again. His burning eyes watched the plane vanish into the distant blue sky. Then he heard sirens—on land and on the water. On the shore people were running. The Shadow looked once more at where the amphibian had vanished, and he swore that CYPHER would be destroyed!

Then he submerged and swam far underwater. When he emerged on the shore he was alone in the high bullrushes. He glided away. Now there was only Paris and Jary Du Neuf.

9

WHEN MARGO LANE, in her guise of Ellen Morgan, arrived in Paris, she went straight out to the taxi stand. A taxi driver leaned against his taxi, casually reading a newspaper. The driver was third in line. Margo, as Henry Arnaud's secretary Ellen Morgan, pretended to be waiting for someone or something to come out of the terminal. The taxi driver got into his cab. In his proper turn he arrived at the loading point. Margo pretended to give up her wait and moved quickly to the taxi. She got in and it drove off.

"*Bien*, Margo, we have a large case, *oui?*" the taxi driver said, turned and grinned.

"Yes, Marcel, very big. Be sure we are not being followed."

"*Mais oui!*" Marcel Guyot said. "We will not be followed."

The small Frenchman grinned. It was the kind of challenge the volatile agent and taxi driver enjoyed. Guyot was more than proud of his prowess behind the wheel of a taxi, especially in Parisian traffic. It was just at the rush hour in the French capital, and Marcel had the tricky assignment of being sure to lose anyone who might be following, while not causing some disastrous accident, the kind of mass accident so common in the wild melee of Parisian traffic. Marcel Guyot considered that he had been born with great skill at the wheel of a car. He was not quite right, and the wild drive was somewhat unnerving to Margo in the back seat. Marcel grinned as he drove with one eye cocked on his rearview mirror. If any car had been following, it would have been forced to give up the chase at any of a dozen places or end in certain destruction in front of a charging bus, or truck, or careening private car. Marcel drove with his customary reckless abandon and much screeching of brakes. At last, as they neared the apartment in St-

Germain-des-Pres where Henry Arnaud lived in Paris, Marcel turned and grinned at Margo.

"No one follows us now, eh?"

"Unless they have wings," the disguised Margo said. "All right, Marcel, take me to the apartment. Then drive around, and come back and report."

"*Oui*," Marcel Guyot said.

The volatile Frenchman turned off the Boulevard-St-Germain and pulled up in front of the small, inconspicuous apartment where The Shadow had his secret apartment—and where each of his alter-egos had an apartment. There was a different apartment for each of them: Kent Allard, Lamont Cranston and Henry Arnaud. And they surrounded the secret apartment of The Shadow. Margo, as Ellen Morgan, stepped out and pretended to pay Marcel. The small driver drove off. Margo walked into the building. The *concierge* threw up her hands in joy.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Morgan! It has been so very long," the beaming old lady cried.

"It has indeed, Madame DuLac," the disguised Margo said.

"You are to stay? Monsieur Arnaud he is coming to Paris?"

"Soon, I think, Madame," Ellen Morgan said.

"*Bien!* Ah, with Monsieur Allard and Monsieur Cranston away, my house has been desolate," Madame DuLac said. "You will take an *aperitif*?"

"Not now, Madame DuLac, *merci*," the disguised Margo said. "I expect a friend. I will go to my apartment."

"But of course," the old woman said, and winked. "You have a friend Monsieur Arnaud does not suspect, eh? Ah, *bien, bien!*"

Ellen Morgan smiled and took her key. She climbed the stairs to the top floor apartment that was the Paris home of Henry Arnaud. She let herself in, and turned on the lights. Her practiced eyes told her that all was as it should be. The small hairs on the windows and drawers were undisturbed. The secret camera that surveyed the apartment showed only the blank and empty spaces of the rooms themselves. Margo, as Ellen Morgan, made herself a drink, and waited for Marcel Guyot. She did

not have to wait long. The small taxi driver knocked at the secret side door that led up from the hidden side entrance no one but members of The Shadow's team knew.

"Come in, Marcel," the disguised Margo said.

The small taxi driver came in the secret door and sat down. His eyebrows arched as he saw the drink in Margo's hand. The disguised woman smiled and poured a cognac for Marcel. The driver took it with a flourish.

"*A votre sante!* We are in business, Margo, *oui?*"

"That depends on what you have to tell me," Margo said.

Marcel Guyot shrugged. "It is much too much for the coincidence, *oui?* As you know, the Chief made the order that we all watch any important visitors, any public place, all of it. We were to see if anything bad it would happen, *non?* So, I watch. My, ah, associates they watch. We cannot watch all, alas. I myself am not where anything happens. But my cousin, Andre, a fine man, he was where the bomb was thrown that killed the African diplomat. When he reported to me, he mentioned that he had seen Jary Du Neuf! Naturally, I was alert, *hein?* This Jary Du Neuf, I am aware about. A strong man, but cold. A fanatic, *oui.* I ask my cousin very closely. This Jary he did nothing himself, but Andre, my cousin, he was sure Jary was very close to the poor fool who threw the bomb. Very close. Unfortunately, my cousin did not see anything definite. So I do not report. I . . ."

"You should have reported, Marcel," Margo snapped. The organization of The Shadow, as any organization, lived on its records and its communications.

Guyot shrugged. "Perhaps, but there was then nothing to report. I did not know that Jary Du Neuf had been missing. It was not until my, ah, *contact*, yes, in Interpol reported, that I knew this Jary could be of importance. My, ah, contact, another cousin, you see? Fortunately, I am related to many. But I do not tell it. So, I learned that Interpol also had observed this Jary Du Neuf at the killing of the American businessman. *Ma foi*, what a crime—in broad daylight at the opera! But, I come to the point. When I learn, from my cousin at Interpol,

that they observed this Jary Du Neuf at that killing, also very close to the man who killed the American, also doing nothing, but very close, then I know I have a report to make. So I report."

Margo pursed her lips, the effect being one of severity on the face of Ellen Morgan. "In neither case was Du Neuf actually seen to do anything?"

"*Non*," Guyot said, shrugged. "But twice? A man like this Jary?"

Margo nodded. "All right. Where is he now?"

"Ah, I have of course watched him," Guyot said. "He is an elusive one, but I have located where he drinks. I have tried to observe and even follow him, but he is most careful. He is also the expert at losing a follower. So far I have not located where he lives or who he works with, but I know where he drinks. He is a Frenchman, an Algerian, and a soldier—he will return always to where he drinks."

"And this place is?"

"The Cafe Pont Neuf, he is arrogant, this Jary. He chooses a cafe with his own name. It is a large cafe, with, how you say, the entertainment. It is not far from here, in the Quarter. I think he chooses it carefully—it has two side entrances as well as the main entrance."

"When is he there?"

Guyot looked at his watch. "Perhaps now. Perhaps many hours from now. He does not come every day. But if he should come, he could be there already."

"I would prefer if he were there first. A man is always more alert when he arrives. After a few drinks and some hours of safety, he relaxes," Margo said.

"Good. Let us say I will come for you in two hours, after dark," Marcel said.

"Good. I think I will go as myself. While I'm inside, you and one of your cousins watch the side entrances."

Guyot agreed and left. Margo removed her disguise and had her dinner. Two hours later Marcel was back. Together they went to the Cafe Pont Neuf, but only Margo entered. In the Latin Quarter an unescorted woman in a cafe caused no notice. She took a table and ordered a Pernod. She sat there most of the night. Jary Du Neuf

did not appear. When the cafe closed, Margo went home and went to sleep. She reported in to Burbank, but Burbank had no further instructions. Cranston or The Shadow had not reported in as yet. Margo slept well. She spent the day investigating the scenes of the murders in Paris, and at Interpol Headquarters where a pass from Commissioner Weston got her access to the files. She found nothing she did not know—except that all the killings had the same pattern. No motive, no warning, no knowledge of the act on the part of the killers who had been caught. Not all had been caught, which made her think of Berlin and the crime The Shadow had followed up. In all cases, the murdered man had been of small importance—and yet of some importance.

Just after dark, Marcel Guyot appeared again. Again he drove Margo to the Cafe Pont Neuf. Again she walked in alone and took a table and ordered a Pernod. But there the similarity ended. This time Jary Du Neuf was in the cafe. Margo had no trouble recognizing the fanatic Algerian-Frenchman. She had seen his picture in the hands of Marcel Guyot, and in the files of Interpol, and she could not mistake that lean, sensual face. It was a dark face, and yet not really dark—the face of a man who had spent much time in the sun. A handsome face, with the full, sensual mouth that so many women find intriguing. His hair was dark and curly, with a faint shine as if lightly oiled. His nose was thin and aquiline, but there was a flair to the nostrils that made a person, especially a woman, think of a sleek bull in a green field. His hands were long and strong as he sat and let his fingers caress a glass of some *aperitif*. But it was his eyes!

His eyes, when Margo came in, glanced idly at her—the way a man like Jary Du Neuf will automatically glance at any woman when she enters a room—and turned back to watch the sinuous, halfnaked singer who undulated on the small stage at the end of the long room. Margo took her seat, ordered her Pernod, and watched Jary Du Neuf. The key was in his eyes—fanatic eyes. They were not the eyes she would have expected in such a man. She would have been prepared for large, luminous eyes;

or calculating eyes; or weak, sensual eyes. But the eyes of Jary Du Neuf were those of a cold fanatic. They were eyes of steel, deep-set and more than half insane. There was a glow to the man's eyes, an inner glow that had nothing to do with the undulating female he watched how. They were eyes that showed that the mind behind them was not all in this cafe, was not concerned only with the female belly in front of him, was, in fact, little concerned with anything that was outside the fanaticism of his mind.

Du Neuf was nervous, and yet there was more. The Algerian was keyed-up. His long fingers played with his drink. He watched the singer-dancer, but he watched with a distracted face. From time to time he looked around the room as if expecting someone. Margo sat quietly, drinking her Pernod and watching the floor show. The sinuous singer-dancer gave way to a scrawny young man who sang in nasal French and clutched the microphone. Margo watched him as if he were good, and continued to observe Jary Du Neuf from the corner of her eye. The adolescent singer finished his wailing and left the stage. He was replaced by a piano player. Margo glanced at Jary Du Neuf. She sat alert. The Algerian had half risen at his table. A small man approached him. She could not see the face of the small man. Jary Du Neuf was excited and yet deferential. The Algerian almost bowed as he indicated that the small newcomer should sit down. The stranger sat. And when he sat, Margo saw his face. She did not recognize the face—but it was not a face she would ever forget. The face was small and flawless, with nothing to distinguish it except that it seemed to shine faintly in the light of the cafe. A simple, ordinary face—except that it did not move. The small man sat, and Jary Du Neuf listened as if the man were talking, but the lips of the small man did not move, the nose and eyes did not move. The whole face was rigid, frozen, as if made of plastic!

Margo watched them as they talked. Or, rather, as the small newcomer talked and Jary Du Neuf listened. The small man wore a good but ordinary suit, his hands were slender and expressive as he talked, but Margo could not take her eyes from the face that never

moved. She could not hear the man, the stranger speaking low to the eager Algerian, but the intensity of his words were clear on Jary Du Neuf's face. Then, as she watched, the small stranger took an object from his pocket and passed it to Jary Du Neuf. Margo tried to see what it was. She raised slightly in her chair to get a glimpse. The object seemed to be some kind of large, white badge. Jary Du Neuf put it into his pocket. Margo sat back. But she was too late. Her slight movement had caught the eyes of the small man with the rigid face. Margo saw the small man stare at her. He seemed to stare for a long time. His immobile face showed no reaction, but behind the eye-holes of the plastic face his eyes seemed to suddenly brighten. He turned and spoke casually to Jary Du Neuf. The Algerian looked at her briefly, and then looked away around the now crowded room of the cafe. Margo watched them. She had a peculiar feeling that the small man with the plastic face had recognized her, and yet she had never seen him before this. Whatever the case was, they were alert, and Jary Du Neuf was studying the room to see who else might be there. Suddenly, the small man was up and gone. Before Margo could move, the small stranger was almost out of the cafe. Margo watched him, and then turned back to her primary job—Jary Du Neuf was gone.

Margo jumped up. The Algerian was walking rapidly in the direction opposite to the direction of the small man. She had only a moment to make her decision. She bent over her ring. "Code Ten, come in Marcel. Code ten. Follow small man with plastic face now leaving cafe. Wearing grey suit, no hat, face does not move. A kind of mask."

Margo did not wait for an answer, Guyot would have the message. She left her table and walked swiftly after Jary Du Neuf.

The Algerian almost ran out through the hallway that led to the side exit. Margo pursued him. She bent and drew her small automatic from her stocking. Ahead, Du Neuf went through a curtain and vanished. Margo followed and found herself out in the alley that ran along the side of the cafe. It was a narrow alley littered

with debris and corroded garbage cans. Cats scampered for cover. The alley was dark, the only light coming from two windows high up in the next building, and from a street lamp at the alley mouth. The night had turned misty now, and in the alley Margo saw only hazy shadows. One of them moved toward the alley mouth. It was the shape of Jary Du Neuf. The Algerian seemed intent only upon getting away. Margo pursued the shadowy figure down the alley through the mist.

Suddenly there was firing ahead. Margo went to cover, her automatic ready. Jary Du Neuf had vanished. A man stood at the mouth of the alley. Margo recognized the man as one of Marcel Guyot's helpers. Then she saw Jary Du Neuf crouched in the cover of a break in the side wall of the alley. The helper of Guyot came quickly into the alley with his pistol out. He had seen Margo and was coming to her aid. The shots must have been fired by Du Neuf. Too late Margo realized that the agent coming to her aid did not see Jary Du Neuf. She shouted.

"Back! Get back! Take cover!"

Her shout, and Jary Du Neuf's shot, came at the same instant. The man had no chance. At the shout he started to go down, and Du Neuf's bullet slammed into him. The man was hurled back against the alley wall and lay still. The alley became silent. Margo, in the cover of the garbage can, searched for Du Neuf, but the man did not move again to reveal his position. He seemed to do nothing. Margo crept through the mist of the alley toward where she had seen Du Neuf last. She held her automatic ready, cocked, the safety off. She moved carefully, silently, all the skill of her years of training with the Shadow effective now as she continued to stalk her man in the dark mist of the alley. A faint breeze seemed to stir the silence and mist. A breeze that blew the mist away for a moment, and Margo saw that Du Neuf was not where he had been. Still crouched low, she searched the alley with her eyes. She still saw nothing.

The faint breeze blew again.

Margo blinked, stared toward the far end of the

alley where it opened into the dim Parisian street. The faint breeze had blown the mist and she thought she had seen figures. Men coming slowly and silently into the alley. And something else—Jary Du Neuf standing far up the alley and waiting for the men to join him. In the momentary clearing of the mist she saw them clearly now—three men in black and Jary Du Neuf standing with them. For a moment they stood there like a tableaux against the street lamp behind them—then they were gone. The mist rolled back, thicker, with the faint breeze blowing under it. But Margo had seen them, and they were Jary Du Neuf's friends. She turned, still crouched in case they opened fire, and moved quickly back to the door she had come out through. She opened the door to go back inside until she could get help. Only she did not open the door.

The door would not open.

The door was locked from the inside.

Her back to the locked door, Margo turned to face up the alley. Now she knew that it was a trap. She moved away from the door and crouched again, her automatic ready. She bent her face close to her ring radio. "Mayday! Marcel, mayday! I am trapped in the alley to the left of the cafe. Four men in alley mouth, side door to cafe locked. Repeat, am trapped, mayday!"

Margo clicked off and waited for an answer. Then she stopped thinking about an answer. She heard the voice of Marcel Guyot, but she did not hear the words. She was looking at the mist. Low to the ground the mist was suddenly very thick—thick and a pale yellow color. A pale yellow thickness in the mist coming rapidly toward her close to the ground. She felt her throat suddenly constrict. There was an odor—a sharp, yet pleasant odor. She began to cough.

Gas!

Quickly she pulled out her handkerchief and covered her mouth. She ran toward the rear of the alley. She ran straight up to a high wall. A wall much too high to climb. She looked for footholds, handholds, any flaws in the wall. There was nothing. The wall rose smooth

and straight into the mist. The alley was a dead end. She turned.

Already the thick yellow gas was creeping swiftly along the ground toward her beneath the mist. She began to cough again.

10

IN THE MIST Margo choked. Behind the mist, beyond the yellow cloud that moved close to the ground and then diffused up through the mist itself, Margo saw the shadowy figures. She tried to talk into her ring radio, but her voice would not come out in anything but a cough. She raised her automatic. At least she could take some of them with her. Once she fired they would know exactly where she was and would shoot her without waiting for the gas. At least it would be quicker. Her finger tightened on the trigger, the small automatic aimed at one of the shadowy figures beyond the mist and the gas.

The sound came from behind her, from behind and above.

Her finger continued to tighten on the trigger.

The sound came again, a faint scrape and then—a voice. Margo whirled, looked up as she coughed in the mist and gas. She saw the looming black shape high on the wall that blocked the alley.

“Quick, Margo!” the voice of The Shadow hissed down.

An object dropped down. Margo caught the gas mask—a special mask developed by The Shadow himself, small enough to fit in a pocket, and with a tiny attached cylinder of oxygen. Margo, gasping now, put the mask on. Instantly the pure oxygen went to work. Her coughing stopped, her vision cleared, she breathed easily. The next instant The Shadow was beside her, holding her up as the mask and oxygen cleared her head and her straining chest. She clung to the black-garbed Avenger for a long moment. Then, the mask working, her mind and body ready again, she looked up at the shape of her Chief misty in the alley. The Shadow was a macabre figure, more macabre

than ever with the small gas mask hiding all but his fiery eyes. The burning eyes and the glowing fire-opal girasol shone red through the mist. The great black shape of The Shadow seemed to blend into the mist itself.

"Where is Jary Du Neuf, Margo?" The Shadow said.

"There, with them on the other side of the gas," Margo said.

"Very well. Marcel is waiting behind them. I was with him, and came to you when we could not contact you. Now . . ."

"I sent Marcel after the other man!"

"The man is clever, Margo. He eluded Marcel even before Marcel received your message."

"You know who he is? That horrible plastic face?"

"I know him, Margo," The Shadow said grimly in the mist of the alley, "and we will meet again. But now I want Jary Du Neuf. I want him alive, Margo, he is our only link to them."

"Them?" Margo said.

"CYPHER, Margo," The Shadow said. "Our antagonist in the Santa Carla affair."

"I remember," Margo said.

"This time we must destroy them," The Shadow intoned harshly. "Jary Du Neuf is our link. I want him alive. You have your gun ready, but do not kill him. Follow me through the gas. Surprise should be on our side."

In the mist of the alley the gas had risen high now. Through the gas and mist the vague shapes of the four men began to move closer. They all wore gas masks, but the figure of Jary Du Neuf was obvious—he wore the only street clothes among the black uniforms on the three other men. The four men moved in carefully but with little caution. They knew the deadly nature of the gas they had unloosed against Margo. They had almost reached the wall, their eyes eagerly looking for Margo's slumped and lifeless body. Instead, they saw the great black shape of The Shadow burst from the mist and yellow gas like some monster of the mist itself. They saw the billowing cape that was like the wings of some giant bird. They saw the blazing eyes that seemed to burn with an avenging and terrifying fire. They saw

the chilling and macabre gas mask that made The Shadow even more terrifying as he seemed to fly from the mist and swoop down upon them.

The chilling laugh filled the alley.

For a moment the four men stood as if paralyzed.

Then they broke. They ran in the instant of sheer, unreasoned panic. They fled pell-mell, for that instant no longer the trained soldiers they were. The great black shape, the weird laugh, the mist of the alley, the sudden shock at being confronted by a chilling adversary where they had expected only the dead body of a woman, broke them and they fled up the alley through the mist. The Shadow bounded after them, his black cape billowing out, his wild laugh pursuing them through the night and mist of the alley. Behind The Shadow, Margo followed with her automatic ready.

At the mouth of the alley Marcel Guyot jumped out into the path of the fleeing men and opened fire. The shots went high over their heads—purposely high, Marcel did not know which one of the men in gas masks was Jary Du Neuf. He fired to turn them, the way a cowboy fires to turn stampeding cattle.

They turned, started to run back, saw the bounding figure of The Shadow, and they stopped. In that instant, miraculously, the panic left them. They stopped, stood their ground, raised their weapons. But they were too late. The black-shrouded figure of The Shadow was among them. Margo came up behind. Marcel Guyot ran in from the street. Marcel shot one of them dead in his tracks. Margo shot a second. The Shadow's long arms crushed the other two into the mist of the alley stones. The last to fall, under the quick hands of The Shadow, was Jary Du Neuf—knocked down and out by a single blow. A careful blow of The Shadow that stunned but did not kill. Quickly, The Shadow bent and threw the unconscious Du Neuf over his shoulder. The three ran out of the alley. Marcel led them through the mist to his taxi. Moments later there was nothing on the misty street of the Latin Quarter, nothing in the silent alley, but the bodies and the cautious people of the Quarter who came slowly out and gathered in silence at the alley mouth. Far

off the undulating horn of a Parisian police car began to sound. By the time the police arrived, there was nothing at all on the street or in the alley but the bodies and the mist.

In the hidden room of his Paris headquarters, The Shadow bent low over the unconscious form of Jary Du Neuf. His fiery eyes glowed above the red-light of the fire-opal girasol ring on his long fingers. In his long fingers he held a hypodermic needle. Behind him, Margo Lane stood in the dim light of the silent room. Margo held the switch of a tape recorder. Marcel Guyot stood to her right in front of the open window that showed the dark and misty Parisian night above the roofs of the city.

In the silence, The Shadow plunged the hypodermic syringe into the bared arm of Jary Du Neuf. The Avenger handed the empty syringe to Marcel. Margo moved closer. Where he lay on the bed, Jary Du Neuf moaned and began to stir. The Shadow stood above the Algerian, his fiery eyes concentrated like burning coals on the moaning form of the man. Marcel Guyot leaned forward. Jary Du Neuf opened his eyes and looked up into the hawklike face of The Shadow. For a moment there was terror in the fanatical eyes of the Algerian. Then the eyes hardened, his memory returned, and Jary Du Neuf stared without flinching up at the glowing eyes of The Shadow. The Avenger's voice was low, hard.

"How long have you belonged to CYPHER, Jary Du Neuf?"

The Algerian said nothing.

"When you could not achieve your plans, you joined CYPHER, Jary Du Neuf, an organization dedicated to all that is evil in man!"

Du Neuf did not answer. The handsome Algerian's fanatic eyes stared up, his body straining as if to force his body to anger.

"You met a Section Director tonight," The Shadow went on, his low voice relentless. "I know the Section Director. I know what you are!"

Behind The Shadow, Margo stood with the control to

the tape recorder in her hand. The Algerian looked at her, and he looked at Marcel Guyot. There was a coldness in Du Neuf's fanatic eyes as he looked at Guyot, as if he recognized the taxi driver and felt only hatred for the man he now knew was an agent of The Shadow. Then his eyes returned to The Shadow who loomed over him. His face reddened with the effort to make himself angry. The Shadow leaned down.

"You will tell me, Jary Du Neuf. I can make you tell me all I need to know! What is the project you are working on for CYPHER? I know you were there when two killings took place. Why were those men killed? What is behind it? Why did the killers kill men they did not know?"

Du Neuf spoke for the first time. The Algerian laughed a short, cruel laugh.

"You will learn nothing! We were told of you. A man in black who has strange powers. Yes, I know of you. But you will learn nothing! Nothing!"

The laugh of The Shadow echoed through the silent room above Paris. Outside through the window the night was dark and the lights of the city were diffused in the mist.

"I will learn all you know, Jary Du Neuf," The Shadow intoned. "You force your body to become angry, you think you will die and escape. No! You will not die! Your destruct will not work, Jary Du Neuf!"

The Shadow's laugh rang through the room.

Jary Du Neuf paled. "Not work? How..." The Algerian laughed. "You have removed it? When? You fool, do you..."

The Shadow pointed to the Algerian's chest. "It is not removed! Look!"

Jary Du Neuf looked at his chest. There was no bandage, no wound. Now his fanatical eyes became scared, puzzled. He looked up at the mocking, hawklike face of The Shadow. He looked at Margo where she stood expressionless. He looked at Marcel Guyot. Then he looked again at the burning eyes of the Avenger.

"Not . . . removed? Then I will die before I tell . . ."

"NO!!" The Shadow's voice boomed out in the silent

room. "No, Jary Du Neuf, you will not die, and you will tell! I have injected you with a counteractant! Your destruct works on the rise of your blood pressure, you know that. You are programmed to resist my questions, and when you resist your blood pressure rises. But I have injected you with a solution that will not allow your blood pressure to rise! The destruct will not work! Now you will tell me what I must know!"

Jary Du Neuf blinked, stared. "It . . . will not . . . work? No, you lie! It must work! We can never tell! We . . ."

The Algerian stopped. His stammering voice went silent. He looked up into the glowing eyes of The Shadow. He felt the power that reached like an electric current from the mind of the blackgarbed Avenger into his mind. A stream of power, rising and falling like an inexorable river. A cloud flowing from the mind of The Shadow into, through, over the frantic mind of Jary Du Neuf. A cloud of power that settled softly, gently over the mind of the Algerian. A mist that enclosed, enfolded, sapped the will of the fanatic CYPHER man, until he lay there on the small bed with no more power to resist, quiet, calm and staring up at the hawklike face of The Shadow. The cloud that rested on and in his mind seemed to hold him, his brain and his will, in the palm of some great hand. He lay still, his mind no longer in control of his body. The Shadow leaned closer, his fiery eyes stabbing deep into the clouded brain of the Algerian.

"You are a member of CYPHER?"

"Yes."

"Your rank?"

"Senior Trooper, Assistant Area Leader, Western Europe."

"Who is the Section Director?"

"Section Director 6, Location Z," Jary Du Neuf said.

The Shadow's eyes bored through the clouded brain of the Algerian. The eyes of the Avenger were like a sharp jolt of current to the clouded mind, and the Algerian jerked convulsively where he lay. But he said no more, and The Shadow looked at Margo. The woman nodded—CYPHER was careful, organized. Section Director 6, Location Z, was all Jary Du Neuf could tell about

the small man with the plastic face—it was all he knew. The Shadow bent close again.

“Why were you at the scenes of the killings?”

“That was my post. I carried the tools. Subject was told to take his tools from me.”

“Tools?”

“One bomb, one pistol,” Jary Du Neuf said.

“You were instructed to give these *tools* to the killers? You knew who the killers were?”

“No, I did not know. I did not give the tools to them. I was assigned to a spot and they took the tools from me.”

“They found *you*?” The Shadow said quickly.

“Yes.”

“You neither knew them nor contacted them?”

“No. That was part of the project,” Jary Du Neuf explained.

The Shadow’s voice was stern. “What project? What is the project that requires killings all over the world?”

Jary Du Neuf blinked where he lay, brushed his hands across his eyes. “The presentation, the product brochure. Section 6 formulated the visual brochure as the presentation for formal bids.”

“Formal bids?” The Shadow said. “Bids for what?”

Jary Du Neuf opened his mouth, but he never spoke. His blank eyes seemed to turn as if drawn. The Algerian looked toward the open window of the hidden room above the French capital. He blinked again, the cloud on his mind blocking him momentarily from the present. But the fear broke through. Terror showed in the eyes of Jary Du Neuf. The Algerian half-rose on the bed, opened his mouth again to speak, but all that came out was a strangled croak. The Shadow whirled. Margo turned. Marcel Guyot jumped away from the window and began to turn.

The volley of shots ripped through the open window and into the body of Jary Du Neuf.

The bullets ripped deadly and accurate across the chest and belly of the Algerian. He screamed only once. He lay sprawled in a pool of widening blood that dripped from the bed to the floor.

In a bound, The Shadow was at the window. His automatic was in his hand. Outside, suspended in the night sky of the French capital, was a man in a black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER on the breast. The man seemed to float there, his submachine gun in his hand. On his back was a small, one-man jet flying belt. Now, as The Shadow reached the window, the man fired another burst from his submachine gun. He touched the controls on his small jet belt and zoomed away up into the night. His last burst sprayed the hidden room of The Shadow, but hit nothing. The Shadow grimly raised his automatic and fired four quick, accurate shots. In the sky, the night mist of Paris, the man slumped. For another few seconds the jet belt carried him higher and away to the right. Then, the controls gone from his limp fingers, the belt lost direction and began to slide sideways down the misty sky. The lifeless body of the killer plummeted to earth and smashed into the side of a building. The belt caught on a projection, and the *Cypher* killer hung there in the silent night, swinging as his jets slowly ran down.

The Shadow turned back into the room. Margo and Marcel Guyot were bending over the body of Jary Du Neuf. As The Shadow joined them, Margo looked up. She shook her head.

"He's dead, Chief. Hit four times. He didn't say anything more."

"They found us!" Marcel Guyot said, his voice incredulous.

"Yes," The Shadow said, "they found us. They have an efficient organization. We must abandon these headquarters at once."

"What about Du Neuf?" Margo said.

"Marcel will dispose of the body," The Shadow said. "Take it somewhere in the city and leave it for the police. They will not be sad to find it. I doubt if there will be much investigation. But first, you reported that the small man gave him something."

Margo nodded. "Yes, I saw it."

The Shadow bent and searched the body of the Algerian. His long fingers brought out a large white plastic button,

and a small engraved card—the button clipped over the card. The Avenger held the card beneath the light. Its message was simple. I read: *Presentation for Bids, Hong Kong, April 27, 1966. Admit One.*

“April 27,” Margo read. “The day after tomorrow.”

“Yes, Margo, and Jary Du Neuf was to deliver this card to someone.”

Margo looked at the white plastic badge. She read the label in green on the white surface. “Royal Jade Exhibition. April 25 to April 29.”

“The Royal Jade Exhibition, and it must be in Hong Kong,” The Shadow said softly. “This badge will serve to identify a person invited, Margo. It will be a special badge of some kind. Whoever Jary Du Neuf was to contact would wear this badge and appear at the Royal Jade Exhibition.”

“He won’t be there,” Margo said.

“No, Margo, but The Shadow will be!”

The black-garbed Avenger laughed once, his weird laugh ringing out over the misty French capital. Then he motioned to Marcel Guyot, and the three of them left with the body of Jary Du Neuf.

11

SOME HOURS later that night the Paris police found the body of Jary Du Neuf on the promenade above the Seine near the Pont Neuf. They were conscientious, and they searched diligently for clues. Another group of police found the body hanging against the building in St-Germain-des-Pres. A taxi driver, Marcel Guyot, booked a room in a respectable, middle-class hotel for two friends who would arrive in Paris later. An Ellen Morgan, secretary to Henry Arnaud, booked, by telephone, two seats on the early morning jet to Hong Kong.

The police found no clues to the killer of Jary Du Neuf, nor did Interpol who was more than interested in the death of the notorious Algerian. They worked hard

for some weeks, but, in the end, they were forced to regard the case as only another unsolved murder of a man who had been almost certain to end that way. The body hanging on the building also joined the unsolved file. The uniform he wore was unfamiliar to the Paris police, so they assumed that they were dealing with another splinter underground anti-De Gaulle group, and remained alert but not optimistic that they would ever solve the matter.

Marcel Guyot's friends somehow managed to reach their room in the middle-class hotel without any one seeing them. The desk clerk was annoyed, but he trusted Marcel and let the matter go. The reservation for Ellen Morgan and Henry Arnaud was duly confirmed, and the jet to Hong Kong waited for dawn. In the room in the hotel, the "friends" of Marcel Guyot slept briefly, and then went to work to become Ellen Morgan and Henry Arnaud. Marcel Guyot waited on guard in the street below the hotel. No one noticed a sleeping taxi driver on a Paris street. In the room of the hotel, Margo, already in the guise of Ellen Morgan, watched the familiar face of Lamont Cranston change into the face of Henry Arnaud.

"Then CYPHER is behind all the murders and other crimes?" Margo said.

"They are, Margo," Cranston said. "They probably think that Cranston is dead, and possibly The Shadow also. It depends on how fast they learn, and put together, what has happened here tonight."

"You think they will learn?"

"They will learn, Margo," Cranston said grimly. "I do not underestimate them."

"What do we know, Lamont? That the crimes are for some *presentation*, for *bids*?"

"And that the *brochure* for bids will be presented at Hong Kong."

"To men with cards and badges like the one Jary Du Neuf was carrying," Margo said.

"Yes, Margo, and the Senior Trooper woman in New York mentioned that she had made *contacts*. I think there will be many men with badges in Hong Kong."

Cranston stood in the room in the clothes of Henry

Arnaud. The well-known financier was not as conservative as Cranston, and the suit he wore for a trip to Hong Kong was a light tan silk of expensive and modern cut. Arnaud, who had extensive interests in South America, was known to wear expensive clothes of a Latin American cut. The financier made many trips to far-off parts of the world, and, unlike Lamont Cranston, had a reputation of liking to make sharp business deals and quick killings. His interest in gems, and jade, was also well known. Now, as he finished dressing, Cranston inserted the black garb of The Shadow into its hidden pockets inside his suit. Arnaud, too, was, after all, only another of the alter-egos of The Shadow. Then Cranston sat down before his special makeup kit.

"We know one more thing, Margo," Cranston said as he went to work on his face. "That Jary Du Neuf was the source of the weapons those killers used. Somehow, men who had no intention of killing anyone were made to kill, and instructed where they could find the proper weapon. The same thing happened in Berlin. Men who do not know they are to kill will not have weapons. Somehow, they were instructed to kill and find weapons in the saw way!"

"But how, Lamont?"

"That we will learn in Hong Kong," Cranston said grimly.

Cranston bent over his special makeup case. With his mirror in front of him, he went to work. Henry Arnaud was a taller man than Lamont Cranston, and Cranston now put the special built-up shoes onto his feet. In a matter of seconds, with special putty and the secret fluid from a hypodermic needle injected beneath the skin of his nose, the broken and broad nose of Henry Arnaud appeared. (Arnaud's nose, as everyone knew, had been broken in an early boxing career.) A special bridge, designed to stretch the amazingly elastic muscles of The Shadow's face, seemed to elongate the face and hollow the cheeks. The result was the gaunt face of Henry Arnaud. Invisible tape at the corner of the left eye made the eye droop downward. Instant dye of a formula developed in the laboratory by The Shadow himself, turned Cranston's

greying hair into the almost white hair of Arnaud. Finally, clenching his fist and narrowing his left hand with the plasticity of bone and sinew learned from his years of *yoga*, he slipped on the ugly artificial hand, the reported result of losing his left hand in an automobile accident twenty years ago. He closed the case, and stood up.

"Good," Margo said, smiled at her Chief.

Cranston, as Arnaud, smiled once to the woman, and then he became Henry Arnaud, a man who smiled seldom. A tall, gaunt-faced man with a broken nose, a drooping left eye, almost snow-white hair, and the ugly metal hooks of his artificial hand. His shrewd eyes revealed a cleverness that had made him such a feared man in a business deal—eyes that were so different from the hooded, impassive eyes of Lamont Cranston, so much colder than the fiery eyes of The Shadow. Arnaud was known as a strong and silent man who had few friends and who lived for business. He was just the man who might be contacted for some illegal proposition by CYPHER. When he spoke, his voice was gruff and harsh.

"Well, then I suggest we get to work, Ellen?"

"Yes, sir," Ellen Morgan said. Margo immediately and automatically assumed the proper personality to go with her disguise as Ellen Morgan, even as Cranston assumed the proper personality to go with the face and figure of Henry Arnaud.

Arnaud looked at his watch. "I think it is about time, then. Are you sure we have left no clues to our presence in this room?"

"Yes sir," the disguised Margo said.

"Good. Marcel will be ready to take us to the airport. I want to be there early to watch the other arrivals."

Arnaud picked up his attache case—a case that really contained many of the secret weapons of The Shadow—and led the way from the room. They went down the elevator and out across the lobby. By now the clerk was a different man, he only glanced idly at them as they passed. No one else even saw them. Outside, Arnaud raised his artificial hand hooks and seemed to be fortunate to flag down a passing taxi. The financier got in followed by his secretary, Ellen Morgan. Marcel Guyot drove

off without waiting to be told where to go. They were not followed.

They arrived at the airport just before the jet to Hong Kong was due to load.

Paris lay below them in the morning sun, the mist of the night before burned off now. But Henry Arnaud and Ellen Morgan were not watching the city as it faded out of sight behind. They were watching their fellow passengers.

Most of the passengers were apparently normal tourists, mostly going only as far as the first scheduled stop: Geneva. There were the usual businessmen, a few returning Indians and Turks going farther than Geneva, and the many tourists. But there were three men that Arnaud and Ellen Morgan watched closely. One was a tall man, apparently French, who carried a small briefcase he never let out of his hands. He sat with the case on his lap. His face was thin, with a long scar on the left cheek. From time to time he glanced with contempt at the other passengers. In the seat next to the tall, scarred man there was a thin, alert-eyed young man with a suspicious bulge under his suit coat. The man with the scar spoke to no one, looked straight ahead as if he were alone in the giant jet.

"You recognize him?" Ellen Morgan said.

Arnaud nodded. "Yes. Jacques Duval, president of the largest French munitions and weapons cartel."

"We don't know that he's going to Hong Kong," the disguised Margo said.

"No," Arnaud said, "but we will."

"The other two?"

"I don't know them, but I know the type," Arnaud said grimly.

They sat forward. The first man was small and swarthy, a dark-skinned man with the precise manner of a diplomat. He was impeccably dressed in the old-fashioned manner of the diplomats of new countries in under-developed areas. He continually looked at his watch as if he had an important appointment the next ten minutes, and yet the jet was not even due in Geneva for some hours. He

was nervous and grim. Every time he felt someone looking at him he attempted to appear elaborately casual, engrossed in a French magazine he carried on his lap. The second man was very different, and yet the same. Obviously American, he was a burly man who smoked long, thin cigars one after the other. He paid no attention at all to his fellow passengers. He carried a miniature tape recorder and continually spoke into the microphone. In his lap there was a writing pad, and often, before he dictated to his tape recorder, he wrote on the pad, appeared to be doing calculations. From time to time he, too, looked at his watch, and then out the window of the jet as if to see if the jet were on time. Both men, the burly American and the swarthy little diplomat, looked at their fellow passengers as if they were insects, as if they did not exist.

"I think we will have their company all the way, Ellen," Henry Arnaud said.

The disguised Margo glanced out the window. The great *massif* of Mont Blanc was in sight, the snow still thick on the giant peak.

"Here's Geneva," she said. "We'll soon know something."

Arnaud nodded, and watched the great mountain as the jet banked high near the peak to start its approach to the Swiss city.

The next stop was Rome.

With Geneva behind, Arnaud and Ellen Morgan glanced at each other. The three men were still aboard, still silent and detached from the rest of the passengers. Many Italians had boarded at Geneva, and many of the blunt and efficient Swiss businessmen on their way to the Italian capital to do business with their more volatile neighbors. The tourists still crowded the jet, peering out the windows at the Alps spread out below. And one more tight-lipped man had joined the other three. A smallish man with the same air of silent power the others had. And *join* was not the right word. The four men had no connection, never spoke nor looked at each other, but they had recognized each other the way a tiger always knows another tiger even in the dark or in some

strange disguise. The four men were tigers, and they were aware of each other, but they gave no sign. They gave no sign, either, that they were all aware of the fifth, the fifth grim man of perhaps grimmer business—Henry Arnaud.

With Geneva behind, the plains of Italy and the great valley of the Po spread out beneath the clouds below, the four men and Henry Arnaud continued to ride the jet in isolated silence. All around them the tourists and the simpler passengers chattered and enjoyed themselves totally unaware of the five grim and arrogant men in their midst who never chattered and rarely enjoyed themselves. Their enjoyment came not from the pleasures of life, but from the manipulation of life; not from love and a good time, but from power, from the sense of power held in their hands. The tourists, the ordinary people, the simple men of business, knew nothing of this. If they had, they might not have been so happy or so eager as the jet circled for its landing in Rome.

At Rome, two more men of power joined the flight. Two more men who did not board a plane either eagerly or nervously or proudly or happily. They boarded the jet as if they did not know the jet was there, as a matter of simple routine, hardly aware of what their bodies did in the intense preoccupation of their minds. Two men who walked quickly to the jet, but stopped at least once for one last hurried and serious conference with assistants who trotted with them all the way to the jet. Assistants who, when the doors of the jet closed, turned without a smile or wave and hurried back the way they had come on some errand of great importance.

"I know that one, Ellen," Henry Arnaud said.

The man Arnaud knew was small and stocky, a midget bear of a man with the swarthy face of Southern Italy, of Sicily. The man saw and immediately assessed the other five the instant he boarded, but he gave no sign of awareness. He took his seat, opened an Italian newspaper, and began to read. Beside him, a tall man who had boarded with him but had said not one word to him, sat alert and watchful. This tall man kept his hand in

his pocket, and the stocky man himself carried a faint bulge beneath his left arm. He was the first of the tight-lipped travelers to be armed. There was a reason.

"Tucci Stefano," Arnaud said quietly to Ellen Morgan. "The one with him is Aretino, a bodyguard."

"Stefano? The Mafia Chief?" Ellen said.

Arnaud nodded. "He may be the top man of the world, but he is at least known to be top man in Naples. I have encountered Stefano before, but not as Arnaud, luckily. I would say that Hong Kong becomes more important every stop we make."

The second man who joined the company of power men at Rome was of a different stamp. Slender, small-boned, almost girlish, he wore the most expensive of fashionable clothes. Unlike the others he was neither tight-lipped nor unsmiling. He smiled to everyone, glided up the aisle to his seat in an aura of perfume. Behind him there was a uniformed man who carried a picnic basket which clearly contained the dapper man's food and drink—the girlish man obviously not willing to accept the fare of the jet. In his seat the slender fashion-plate beamed at anyone who looked at him, and made continual witty remarks to everyone in general. He made the tourists laugh. He did not make the tight-lipped men laugh. They had seen his eyes. The eyes of the dapper man were neither girlish nor laughing—they were cold, calculating, alert and totally hidden from the observation of others. His face and figure were girlish and laughing, but his eyes hid his mind, and his mind was neither girlish nor laughing. The other six watched him more than they watched each other—they knew a very dangerous man when they saw one.

And he watched them. The girlish man missed nothing all the way from Rome to Istanbul by way of Athens.

First the Adriatic spread below, Yugoslavia off to the North, then it was the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean, and finally the minarets of Istanbul. At Istanbul Ellen Morgan and Henry Arnaud left the jet to walk. Ellen disappeared to report the descriptions of the men on the jet to Burbank in New York. Arnaud watched his fellow travelers, but they did nothing suspicious.

The jet was changed to a new plane, and when it took off on the next leg there were two more tight-lipped men aboard, silent with their secret power.

Through the long night the jet flew, a silence settling over the passengers as if they some how had begun to recognize the type of men who were becoming more and more numerous on the jet as it flew closer to Hong Kong. At Karachi a single, dark-skinned man joined the company of tigers. Arnaud recognized this man too. Azid Ayub Singh, the Sikh financier and fanatic proponent of Sikh nationalism. At Calcutta the two men were both Indians, one the violent Moslem advocate of Indian war with the Chinese People's Republic to the north, Kalyan Roy. At Singapore the last man joined the group who were now only too aware of each other. This last was perhaps the most infamous, Generalissimo Wu Teng, former warlord of all eastern China and for many years a man without either country or friends in the nations of the world, but not a man without either money or power.

The silence in the great jet was as thick as the ice of Antarctica as the jet finally circled for Hong Kong. The tightlipped men of silent power all watched each other. No one spoke. Even the girlish Italian dropped his act as the jet circled the island colony and began to descend. His cold face slowly smiled as he looked at all the grim visages around him. The jet touched down, and all the silent men gathered their briefcases and tape recorders and prepared to leave. As they stood, each man reached into his pocket and brought out a large, white plastic button that read *Royal Jade Exhibition*. Each man pinned the button to his lapel. No one looked at anyone else as they filed off the jet.

Henry Arnaud, his white button affixed to his lapel, was the last one off.

12

IN THE HOTEL suite reserved for Henry Arnaud and Ellen Morgan, the gaunt-faced financier held his small communications ring in the hooks of his artificial hand.

"Report!"

The voice of Burbank came from far-off in the dim blue light of the secret communications room hidden behind the plush office of Lamont Cranston high above Park Avenue.

"Identification has been made of all passengers on the jet to Hong Kong. Jacques Duval, as reported. The small, swarthy man is Jahpeth Kedda, War Minister of Zambala. The burly American is Mike Haywood, President of Haywood Arms Corp., often suspected of supplying arms to anyone who will pay. The man who boarded in Geneva is Helmut Gresh, Managing Director of Interarm, a weapons company. Tucci Stefano you know. The other man from Rome is Fabian D'Paoli, reputed to be the head of an international group of paid assassins. Kemel Anat and Colonel Adul Natuion are the two who boarded at Istanbul, both are suspected of heading antigovernment forces in their countries. The man you did not know in Calcutta seems to be Razid Ben Jokar, a leader of anti-Chinese movements in Sinkiang Province. General Teng you know."

"Very good, Burbank. Is that all?"

"Yes. No further progress on the McBride affair here. Nothing was found in the wrecked barge except some bodies, all unidentified."

"Signing off," Arnaud said.

In the elegant suite of the plush Hong Kong hotel, Arnaud sat for a time in thought. The names Burbank had reported were a list of the silent power of the world—all men with a purpose that was violent. A ministry of violence was gathered in Hong Kong, and they were not gathered to attend the Royal Jade Exhibition. There

was only one way to learn what they were gathered to attend. Arnaud turned to Ellen Morgan.

"Ellen, in the morning I will attend the session of the Royal Jade Exhibition. I want you to remain out of sight, away from me, and away from this suite. In case anything should go wrong, they would come for you. They must not find you. But keep watch on me, there might be need for help."

"The badge should get you in," the disguised Margo said.

"Yes, but they are clever people. There is no way to be sure whether or not they know that Jary Du Neuf failed to deliver the badge and invitation to the proper person. There has been little time, it should be safe for me to attend, but just in case I want you watching."

"I'll watch," Ellen Morgan said.

"Good. Now I suggest some sleep. We may have need for all our strength tomorrow."

"Will you go armed?"

"I think not, Ellen, they will be careful," Arnaud said. "If there is trouble, The Shadow will handle it. Now we must sleep. Tomorrow will be a long day."

The Royal Jade Exhibition was in one of the largest hotels on the island of Hong Kong. At precisely ten o'clock that morning, Henry Arnaud strode through the hotel lobby and presented his badge of admission at the door to the exhibition hall. The guard took his name, gave him the exhibition literature, and bowed him into the hall.

The hall was, even at this early hour, crowded. People wearing the white plastic badges milled among each other and in front of the glass cases that displayed the most breathtaking jade Arnaud had ever seen. But he was not here to admire jade. He took a cup of tea, and wandering casually around the crowded room pretending to inspect the jade on display. But he was watching the people. He saw many of the faces from the jet. Apparently many of his fellow passengers were eager and anxious, too.

And there were many faces who had not been on

the jet from Paris, but which he recognized—faces from the countries behind the Iron Curtain, and they were not standing as friends. This was a dog-eat-dog affair. Still, most of the people in the hall of the exhibition were legitimately there to look at jade. Somehow the people who had been invited to Hong Kong by CYPHER, and who had come, it seemed, eagerly, had to be identified and then contacted. Arnaud did not think that the CYPHER meeting would be held in this hotel, or anywhere near.

For an hour Arnaud drank coffee and inspected jade, holding two lengthy conversations with Chinese businessmen anxious to sell their jade, especially to a man with Arnaud's financial connections, but also trying very hard not to look anxious. Arnaud enjoyed the talk, he truly admired good jade, and considered making an actual deal. The Chinese were delighted. So delighted that they went to find a colleague they wanted in on any deal because, as it happened, he had more jade artifacts than any of them. While he waited, and listened to the Chinese, Arnaud glanced around the hall. He came alert at once. There were noticeably fewer men in the hall!

Arnaud carefully studied the faces—many of the missing were those who had been with him on the jet! Still talking to the eager jade salesmen, Arnaud watched the hall. They were leaving very carefully. So far he had seen no contact, and they were trying to match their leaving with the arrival of legitimate jade lovers. Only for a brief moment had the lessening of the crowd been so noticeable. Now it was again a full crowd, and Arnaud bowed to the third Chinese who had finally been located and brought while he let his glance study every corner of the room. He had concluded his deal, the Chinese were ecstatic, when he saw the first contact. A small, nondescript, but impeccably dressed Chinese approached the American Mike Haywood. Haywood bent to listen, straightened quickly, and then casually strolled from the room with the small Chinese a good ten feet behind him. Both men left the room and disappeared across the lobby. Arnaud, still accepting the thanks of the Chinese with whom he had done business, waited and observed very

carefully. He saw the small Chinese hovering not far away. He managed to extricate himself from the profusely grateful Chinese jade merchants, and wandered away toward a showcase where he stood nearly alone. He felt rather than saw the small Chinese beside him.

"You will not look at me. You will leave through the lobby, across the side entrance. You will be met there."

Arnaud nodded, turned, and walked casually from the exhibition hall. The contact was made.

In the lobby he strode across to the side entrance, aware that the small Chinese was still behind him. At the side entrance a European stood reading the newspaper. Arnaud passed him, began to turn to locate the Chinese. The European spoke without either looking at Arnaud or raising his head from his newspaper.

"Don't turn. Walk down the block to the left. Walk into the alley behind the hotel. Keep walking until contacted."

Arnaud walked to his left along the block teeming with the people of Hong Kong. No one noticed him in such a crowd. He reached the mouth of the alley that ran behind the hotel. He turned into the alley and walked along it. He walked slowly, but nothing happened all the way to the other end. Arnaud smiled to himself. They were indeed careful—the alley walk was for nothing more than to be sure he was not being followed closely enough to cause them any trouble. He knew nothing would happen until he reached the other end of the alley. But when he did he saw at once the two men waiting just out of sight. One of them stepped to him. The other went behind him.

"You understand, sir," the first one said.

The second quickly blindfolded him, and he felt them both guide him politely but firmly into the open door of a car that pulled up that instant. The car doors closed and it immediately drove off. Arnaud was aware that the car had curtains drawn across the windows as a double precaution, and to prevent any of the millions of Hong Kong growing curious if they happened to look in and see a blindfolded man. And for a time the car moved slowly, the noise of traffic and people all around

it. They were still driving through the downtown area of Hong Kong. After a time the noises lessened and the car drove faster, but for a short distance. The car stopped, and Arnaud was helped out. He was walked for some fifty yards, and then he heard the sound of water.

He felt soft earth, heard the sound of water, and then felt the yielding wood of a deck beneath his feet. He was walked carefully forward and then asked to sit. He sat down in some kind of comfortable chair. He could feel that he was not alone. Others sat in chairs near him, probably also blindfolded. The wait was short, he guessed that he was the last on this particular boat. The engines of the boat started, and the boat moved away. They were powerful engines, two of them by the sound, and the boat moved swiftly, water slapping against the bow, spray lightly touching Arnaud's face. He heard for a few minutes the sounds of other boats in the crowded harbor of the island colony, and then the unmistakable feel of clearer water. The boat heaved and rolled but continued on its steady course. With his accute sense of direction, Arnaud knew that they were not heading for the mainland, not directly. Perhaps an hour passed, and then the boat began to slow, made a long, sweeping turn, and Arnaud felt the drop of the wind, the quieter water. They were in the shelter of some land—probably an island, one of the many small islands close to the Chinese mainland, but still part of the Crown Colony.

The boat stopped, bumped against some kind of pier.

"You will all please remove your blindfolds now," a polite voice said.

Arnaud removed his blindfold. He saw that the man beside him was the American, Mike Haywood. The man on his other side was a sullen-looking man he did not know, but who, from the cut of his suit, was a Russian. There were ten other men on the powerful launch. Arnaud knew only two more: Tucci, the Mafia Leader; and Duval, the French munitions maker. One of the men was a woman—a small, slender woman with delicate olive features and who spoke softly to the man beside her in Spanish. Her voice was soft, but her lips were

as tight as the men's lips, and her eyes were cruel. Arnaud did not recognize her. But he recognized the woman who stood on the dock with two men. The woman, and the two men, wore the black uniform with the white circle of CYPHER. She was the same woman who had been on the barge—Senior Trooper. Now she stepped forward.

"Thank you for coming, gentlemen, and lady," with a bow to the Spanish woman. "We think you will all find it more than worthwhile. There are two more boatloads to come, and in the meantime we thought you would like to freshen up in the main house. We are completely at your disposal until the time for the presentation. Anything you would like, feel free to ask for it. Now, if you will follow me."

The woman, Senior Trooper, had spoken in English. The two men with her translated into Russian, French, Spanish and German. But it was clear that, with the exception of a few of the Iron Curtain attendees, most of the company needed no translations. They all fell into line behind the woman and began the steep climb from the pier. The climb was up a flight of stone steps. It was steep but short, and Arnaud emerged with the others onto a broad lawn. The lawn was on a sloping plain above the sea across almost the entire small island. It, the broad and immaculate lawn, was hidden from all sides except the sky by a thick screen of tall pines. From the sea, and from the nearby mainland, the island would look like all the other deserted, pine-grown mounds of rock that dotted the area. From the air it would appear to be a simple wild meadow in the center of trees—because the mansionlike house at the far end of the lawn was totally camouflaged on top to seem no more than part of the rocky cliffs of the island. Arnaud studied the scene—another of *Cypher's* totally hidden headquarters, undetectable from anywhere, the lawn large enough for helicopters if not for jets.

"There is a room for each of you in the house," the woman Senior Trooper said. "When you have refreshed yourselves, you will find the bar on the ground floor in the west wing. There will, of course, be a buffet in the bar for anyone who is hungry. You will find literature

describing the work of CYPHER in all your rooms, feel free to ask any of the staff any questions you may have. We are in business to serve you. The presentation itself will begin promptly at one o'clock in the east wing."

By the end of the Senior Trooper's talk, the company had reached the house. Closeup, Arnaud's keen eyes detected that the house was much more than it seemed. The walls were heavy reinforced concrete as thick as a bunker. Many of the windows were false, there only to cover machine gun and recoilless cannon emplacements. It was more a fort than a house, and Arnaud had a strong suspicion that it would be as hard to get out of as it looked like it would be to get into. But he was here to learn what was behind all the seemingly useless and senseless killings, and he followed all the others into the lavish interior of the fortress house.

The lobby was all chrome and color like a giant reception room. The bar, to the right, was dark leather and polished dark wood. A few of the guests turned straight into the bar, either nervous or thirsty, but with no time now for their rooms. Arnaud looked to the left, but the east wing was curtained off, and he decided to have a look at the rest of the house by going up to his room. He saw little but a heavily carpeted corridor at the top of the curving flight of stairs. His room was to the right on the second floor. He did see one thing—there were no windows in the corridor. In his room, left alone, he removed his coat and his shirt and walked to the bathroom to wash up. He acted like a man with an important matter on his mind who wanted to do nothing now but wash, because he was fairly certain that the room would be under scrutiny. It took the disguised Avenger only a moment to locate the camera eye. A small TV camera set in an air duct above the bed.

He continued his normal ablutions, but his eyes were studying the entire room. He saw other vents—vents that were not needed for air, and he knew that a man could not escape from this room if CYPHER did not want him to escape. The vents were gas vents. A TV Camera, gas vents, solid concrete walls twelve feet thick, doors of solid steel, and no windows! Arnaud's keen eyes

saw that the windows were false, all the light in the room was artificial. There were no windows anywhere in the building. An impregnable fortress from outside, a complete prison inside, and at the same time with all the facilities and comforts of a resort hotel. CYPHER was indeed an efficient organization. And for a second, his back to the camera, Arnaud's cold eyes flashed with the indignant fire of The Shadow.

But there was no more to see now in the room, and he dressed and went downstairs and into the bar. The group had expanded to some forty people now. There were many Arnaud had not seen before. They were all the same, male and female—cold-eyed, tight-lipped, cruel-faced men and women who looked and talked and walked power and money. The leaders of violence of every type. The hucksters of death and profit. The cream of those who profited from the misery and fear of the world. They were from all countries, of all races. The outs and the ins. All there in an uneasy truce. They all wore the white badges, they were all, now, drinking as if they stood in some simple hotel in a capital of the world. There was food, and the men of power were eating just like any other group of businessmen attending some conference or business meeting. Arnaud, sick to see them there like vultures hovering in the sky above the dead, pretended to join them, pretended to be one of them, ate and drank and smiled the rare smiles they allowed themselves when some joke was offered. They were worse than vultures, far worse. The vulture waits until a man is dead before he eats him, these men ate the living, fattened from the misery of the living, created and perpetuated that misery. And they stood now in quiet conversation, food in their mouths and drinks in their hands, exactly as they would at any business meeting to discuss the purchase of vacuum cleaners.

Which was, of course, exactly what was happening in the fortress house on the camouflaged island. A business meeting. As if to prove this, a gentle gong rang now, and two men stepped quietly into the room. All eyes turned to look at the two men. One of the men was a big man with the scars of combat on his face.

The other was tall and thin, with one hand gone in some battle. The big man wore the insignia of the United States Special Forces. The tall, thin man wore the insignia of SS Panzer Divisions. Both men wore the grey tunic and slim blue trousers Arnaud now knew was the uniform of the highranking officers of CYPHER. The gold circle of CYPHER gleamed on their breasts. The ribbons of their deserted countries shone on the fronts of their tunics. The tall, thin man had the rank Arnaud recognized as the same as that worn by the man with the plastic face—Section Director. The rank of the big man he did not know, but he learned in the next moment.

“Gentlemen,” the big man said. “We thank you for coming. I know it has been an arduous trip, and I know how busy you all are. But I’m sure you appreciate the need for, shall we say, a quiet meeting out of the, ah, public limelight?” The big man paused to let his joke get its laugh. “And I am sure you will find it all worthwhile. To introduce myself, I am Sub-Commandant Nine. The gentleman beside me is Section Director One. It is our honor, and our pleasure, to be in charge of your welcome. Our Commandant would have been here himself, but it is a matter of policy that he never appears in public. The program itself is under the direction of Section Director Six, as most of you know. If you will follow me, I think we are ready to start.”

The gathered men of power buzzed as they followed the two CYPHER leaders. Arnaud went with the others as they slowly filed into the long room of the east wing.

13

HENRY ARNAUD had seen rooms like the east wing a hundred times before, at a hundred business meetings, under the direction of a hundred efficient advertising agencies. There was the projector set up in the center of the room, the screen at the far end, the rows of chairs, the product itself on a front table covered with a cloth

so that it could be unveiled in a blaze of fanfare. There were the ashtrays on the chairs, the press release, the large photographic blow-ups on the walls where everyone could see them. But there was a difference. The press releases were not for the press, and the photographs on the walls were all of a moment of death!

The enormous enlargements were all pictures of the instant of murder, assassination, robbery and all the other crimes that The Shadow had come here to find the cause of! His cold eyes narrowed, he looked again at the Arab Prince and the thin face of Kurt Pieper in the instant the youth had shot! He was still staring at the photograph, a horrible idea beginning to sink into his brain, when there was a stir in the room and the small figure of the man with the rigid plastic face came quickly into the room, rubbing his thin hands in a business-like gesture. He walked to the front of the room beside the screen, turned, and smiled at them all.

"Good! I see you all decided that the presentation might be worth a long and uncomfortable trip," the cold, crisp voice said. "Well, I think I can promise you that what you are about to witness, the new product developed by CYPHER, will make you forget all about the trip, the time, and the discomfort."

The small Section Director paused for effect, to let his words sink in. His rigid, horribly shining plastic face looked slowly around the room. The drama was set. Abruptly, his eyes, deep behind the holes in the plastic mask that was his face, gleamed once, and he spun around. His arm extended to where a black-uniformed CYPHER soldier now stood at the projector.

"Gentlemen, you will now see our latest product at work. But first, let me present the product itself." With a flourish, the macabre little man drew the cloth from the object on the table beside him. "The X-2!"

The object on the table was the size of a small rifle in length, with a barrel as large as a bazooka. It looked like nothing as much as an old-fashioned woman's hair dryer. It had a rifle stock, a pistol grip just in front of a thick trigger. Wires showed that it was battery-operated. At the muzzle end of the thick barrel was a funnel-like

flare. It looked like a small, deadly bazooka with a place for a wire-recorder spool!

The plastic-faced man nodded to the projectionist.

"If you please, Trooper."

The room went dark. The screen lighted up, and the film began to project. There was a title, *Field Demonstrations of The X-2*. There were detailed views of the small bazookalike weapon itself. There was a brief section showing the weapon being easily handled by one man, being carried up cliffs and across rooftops, being placed in a case about the size of a cello case and carried through busy city streets where no one even looked at it or the man carrying it. The man with the plastic face began his commentary, his voice low and smooth, and yet carrying to all corners of the room.

"You will note the ease of portability, the way the X-2, in its case, attracts no attention. That is an important plus, you will all agree. Once assembled, it requires only ordinary batteries to operate."

The film continued, and Henry Arnaud suddenly felt his skin begin to crawl, his hair stand on end at the back of his neck. He knew now what he was seeing—he was seeing motion pictures of all the useless and senseless crimes, murders, assassinations that had brought him here. He was seeing the field demonstrations of the X-2! There was the reason, the explanation for fifty cold, senseless murders, robberies, attacks—it had all been a field demonstration of this strange weapon that CYPHER was going to sell to these assembled merchants of violence! The crimes had been arranged, committed, and all for only one purpose—that they could be filmed and shown to these human vultures to demonstrate what the X-2 could do. All that Arnaud had to learn now was just what the X-2 did, and he did not have long to wait. He watched the grim and evil film, the horrible pictures on the silent screen, and listened to the low, smooth talk of the man with the plastic face, and his eyes burned with greater and greater anger even as his blood grew colder and colder.

"This first test, as you see, is at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. An excellent test, in that the action had to be created at a considerable distance across open

space. You will note the subject, one Kurt Pieper." The camera zoomed in with a long-range lense, and Arnaud saw again the face of the blond German youth. "Note how Pieper is admiring the Prince in his robes. I would say it is clear that Pieper has nothing but good in his mind for the Prince. Of course, neither we nor the Prince knew Pieper, nor did Pieper know us or the Prince. Nor, I think, did Pieper have any criminal tendencies. So, good. You will observe."

Arnaud watched the camera pan back, pan around to show that no one approached Kurt Pieper. Then, as the camera panned back, a roof a good half mile away came into view. On the roof were two CYPHER men with the X-2. The bazookalike weapon was aimed at Kurt Pieper. The camera zoomed in again. Suddenly, Kurt Pieper's face changed, his eyes went blank and then, quickly the eyes of the blond youth became fanatic, angry. He stared at the Arab Prince. He moved a few feet left, reached into the pocket of a man who did not even look at him, took out the Luger, and shot the Prince. At the instant of shooting, the film stopped.

"You noted, I'm sure, the immediate response to the beam of the X-2. It is typical that the eyes of the subject go empty first, blank out as he comes under the control of the X-2. Moments later, as you saw, the subject responds to the X-2 commands. Not only can the wire-record of X-2 instruct the subject to kill, or steal, or cause any form of violence, it also instructs him where to get the weapon. That is a vital matter, of course. A subject such as Pieper, with no idea of violence, will not carry a weapon. All we did was station our man near him, the X-2 instructed him to take the Luger from our man's pocket."

The film started again, the Prince fell dead, Kurt Pieper turned and made his escape. Arnaud watched. The camera remained close-up on Pieper, the agent of the Shadow did not appear as he followed. Arnaud nodded grimly to himself—CYPHER was not infallible, they had made a mistake by not looking for someone to follow Pieper, they had been overconfident. And Arnaud watched the blond youth make his sure escape as if following a well-worked-out plan.

“Observe how he follows a careful, prescribed escape route as if he has known it all his life. He hasn’t. The route was selected by us, programmed into the X-2 on the wire, and given to Pieper in the instruction beam.”

The scene suddenly shifted from Kurt Pieper and Berlin, to Paris. There, in a crowd, Arnaud saw Jary Du Neuf standing and doing nothing. Again the camera focused on a face in the crowd. “Unknown to us or to victim,” the immobile-faced Section Director said. Again the camera showed the bazookalike X-2 trained on the random face in the crowd. The man became blank-eyed, then fanatical. He moved quietly to take a bomb from the pocket of Jary Du Neuf. He threw the bomb and vanished into the crowd, unnoticed in the melee, and the camera followed his careful escape.

“This subject actually made good his escape. Naturally, the police cannot find him, he has no connection to the crime, no prior record, no involvement with any of the victims. An absolutely perfect mass assassination with no danger of capture of the subject, and absolute immunity from suspicion for the users of the X-2 who controlled the entire operation.”

The film continued to run relentlessly. Arnaud saw the second Paris killing, and Jary Du Neuf again standing in the crowd and waiting for the killer to come to him and take the weapon from his pocket. This time, after the shooting, the killer simply stood with the pistol in his hand as the police swarmed over him. Jary Du Neuf watched with interest. The cold voice of the man with the plastic face commented.

“Of course, for purposes of this presentation, we let many of the subjects be captured. That can be done at any time, it is a most convenient method of throwing suspicion on any group you want to. A very important plus for the X-2. You simply program the beam to instruct the subject to remain until captured! A very good feature, I’d say, gentlemen.”

Partrick McBride stood on the New York theater stage and high above on the fly-catwalk the X-2 aimed downward at the actor who played MacDuff. The actor who played MacDuff plunged the dagger into McBride

and then stood there blinking. The bazookalike weapon aimed at a crowd in Red China. A man died. In the jungle of Viet Nam the X-2 beamed on the unit of United States Special Forces, a color film, and their green berets showed clearly as they surrendered to their astonished enemies who had been ready to die in a final desperate fight they could not win.

"A particular feature of the X-2, gentlemen, it can be used for mass influence. As you see, the Americans could not possibly have lost that encounter—but they did. The X-2 can be operated anywhere, against numbers up to approximately company strength."

In the transfixed audience of purveyors of violence the watchers were making notes. Some seemed to be calculating. Others simply sat and stared with amazed pleasure as they imagined the X-2 already in their hands and they dreamed of what they could do with it. The cable car in San Francisco appeared on the screen, and even Arnaud watched as the young man, Walter Stock, suddenly pushed the woman down, took her purse, leaped from the car, and ran. The camera panned to show the X-2 hidden in a window of a nearby building. The camera then followed Walter Stock in his flight until he suddenly stopped and waited for the police to find him.

"A little comic relief, gentlemen, eh?" the cold voice of the plastic-faced *Cypher* Section Director said. "We thought it would amuse you, but it also serves to show another set of features of the X-2. The size of the crime does not matter, and murder is not required. Any act can be programmed, big or small. And, second, a man can be influenced to first run, then let himself be caught! You will also note the smile on his face. A state of relaxed euphoria is not uncommon after exposure to the beam."

There was the London airport and the Soviet officials. As the Military Attache shot his colleagues, there was a murmur from somewhere in the audience. The Section Director was apologetic. He let his rigid face turn toward where the Soviet delegates sat.

"I regret the necessity, but the unit had to be properly demonstrated. We chose the victims carefully for their

easy replacement. In fact, unless I am wrong, you gentlemen from the U.S.S.R. were, shall we say, not unhappy to see the end of those particular victims and the subject?"

There was a ripple of laughter. The Soviet delegates smiled coldly. Then the French armored truck appeared and the robbery took place with the X-2 focused on the teenagers the whole time. There was more, and Arnaud watched with a growing sense of horror. The X-2 was a diabolical weapon—a weapon that induced unknown and totally innocent and uninvolved men to become killers, thieves, mobs, prisoners when they should have been victors. It went on, example after example, and the cold voice of the rigid-faced Section Director continued its crisp commentary. The brisk voice matched each scene of horror, each senseless killing and crime, with a cold and professional analysis. Then, at last, it was over. The film ended. The lights came on. The grotesque mask of a face turned to the stunned audience.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, you have now seen what the X-2 can do. I believe you are all privy to full reports on these crimes, you are aware that we in CYPHER could not have rigged any of them. I am sure you have full data on all the facts in at least the majority of cases—and that none of them were at all explainable without the power of the X-2."

The small, brisk man waited for this to sink in. Then he continued. "With your knowledge of the X-2, you now can explain all these events. That was, of course, our purpose. The events were an animated brochure, our demonstration of what the unit can do. You are also aware of the aftermath—that none of the subjects was aware either of what he had done, why he did it, or even how or when. Naturally, none of them are aware of the X-2. They are released from control approximately twenty-four hours later, it varies with the subject, and recall nothing at all. In essence, time stands still for the subject. When he comes out of the X-2 influence he reverts to the exact moment before he was exposed to the beam. He thinks no time has passed."

There was a silence in the hall. The stunned audience barely shifted in the long rows of seats. The small

man with the macabre and grotesquely rigid face looked slowly around.

"Are there any questions? No?" the Section director looked toward his burly superior, Sub-Commandant Nine, and the tall, thin Section Director One. "You have anything to add, Sub-Commandant? Section Director?"

"No, you covered it all, Six," the thin Section Director One said.

"A good presentation, George," the Sub-Commandant said. "As usual, Section Six touched all bases. A first rate presentation, and, I might add, a well-organized visual brochure. I think you can get down to the heart of the matter, eh?"

The big Sub-Commandant smiled as he said this. The small Section Director Six, whose name Arnaud now knew was George, nodded his rigid face. Perhaps he smiled, but there was no way to know that. (Arnaud made the mental notes for the Shadow: George Something, or *Georgi*; a Russian; a member of a crack tank command; a man badly injured in the face at some time. George should not be hard to identify, and The Shadow would identify him. CYPHER had made one mistake. Now the grotesque little Section Director Six again faced his audience.

"The heart of the matter, as the Sub-Commandant has said," the small man said. "Yes, let us get to it. You have seen X-2. Now you will bid for it! Sealed bids will be accepted between now and two days from now. Forty-eight hours, that is the time you have, gentlemen!"

There was a violent buzz in the room as all the vultures of death tried to talk at once. The small man held up his hand.

"Please! Let me state our terms. You will bid for a complete deal, *exclusive*! The successful high bidder will receive the prototype you see here, the machines actually used in the pilot demonstrations. The high bid will also get the complete specifications, blueprints, and all data on the principle. Finally, they will get full control of the man who developed the weapon, Dr. Paul Morgan, who is with us at the moment."

"How do we know no one else has it?" a voice called sharply.

The small man nodded his rigid face. "You know by two facts. Dr. Morgan is the only man alive who knows the principle. We, shall we say, *acquired* the good doctor some years ago before he perfected the unit. We turn him and all his data over to you. Clearly, you all have the means to assure yourself that Dr. Morgan is indeed the only man who knows the principle. Second, the reputation of CYPHER. You know who and what we are—a service organization, no more. That is why we are selling the X-2. We did consider a leasing arrangement, but we dislike getting into such long-term paper work, or into the business of supply. No, we will remain a purely service organization, available to anyone who wishes to use us for any particular project of violence they have in mind. Does that answer your questions?"

"You reserve nothing?" another voice shouted above the buzz of voices that greeted the last answer.

"We reserve only one thing. There is a defense against the X-2, known only to us and Dr. Morgan. We reserve the right to keep that defense so that the unit will not be used against us. Of course, we offer our services to operate the machine at a usual fee."

"All to the highest bidder?" A voice called.

"All! Unless, of course, no bid seems high enough to us. In that case we will have to reconsider a leasing arrangement."

The entire room buzzed. Several men stood to shout. "Bid! We bid now! Auction it! I start at one billion!"

The small man moved his rigid face as if he wanted to smile. "Is that dollars, rubles, or pounds? No, no, gentlemen! Sealed bids, that is our offer. Sealed bids within two days. You will be contacted as to the location of the final meeting. Naturally, the successful bidder is free to make sublicensing deals if he wishes, so I suggest you all be there. Now, I think we . . ."

The small man with the grotesque face suddenly stopped speaking and looked to the rear of the long room. The Sub-Commandant turned to look also. Six black-uniformed CYPHER troopers stood in a row in front of the exit, their submachineguns ready and aimed at the audience.

In front of them the woman Senior Trooper held a pistol and looked around the room. Then she raised her head.

"Sir, I report there is an imposter in the room!"

The audience began to hum. They all looked at each other. The Sub-Commandant spoke sharply.

"Someone without a badge?"

"No sir," the woman Senior Trooper said. "All the badges are correct, which is why we did not catch it at the door. But one of the badges is not worn by the correct person!"

Now the audience was in a hubub. They milled, talking, looked all around them, suspicious of everyone. Henry Arnaud acted like all the others. But he was alert. If they had really detected him, he had to be ready to move at once. He edged slowly toward the exit. It was the Section Director with the macabre plastic face who spoke next.

"Whoever the imposter is, it is impossible to escape. You have somehow acquired a proper badge, but you did not know that each badge was secretly coded to its wearer at the time the badge was presented. Our scanners do not detect such a lack of coding immediately, but once detected there is no escape. I suggest that you step forward. It will go easier."

Arnaud realized that he was caught. Obviously, when Jary Du Neuf had been supposed to deliver the badge, he also coded the badge to the wearer. Arnaud's badge was not coded. They would find him soon. And all the while he was thinking this he had edged, unnoticed, to the outer edge of the audience nearest the door. Now he made his break. With a powerful leap he dashed two of the soldiers to the floor, knocked another flying, and was through the curtain before anyone could move. He dashed across the lobby, reached the door, started to open it, and a faint puff of some whiteish gas burst from the door into his face.

He had time to take a single step backward, and no more.

A single step, and there was nothing more but blackness.

14

FIRST he was aware of motion. A lurching, rolling motion as if moving forward, up and down, and swaying sideways at the same time. Then there seemed to be a sense of moving light, rapidly moving light like scenery passing in a hazy motion picture. There was a nausea in his stomach as if he were going to be seasick. A hammering in his head. From moment to moment something hard jabbed into his back. He moved his hand to feel what was jabbing him—but he could not move his hand.

He opened his eyes. He knew at once that he was in a truck, a truck that was driving fast over a bad road. He lay on the floorboards of the truck, his hands and feet bound tight with ropes. The rear curtain of the truck was open and the countryside was passing swiftly behind. A black-uniformed guard crouched at the tailgate. The guard was half dozing. From the look of the dark countryside, and the few small villages the truck passed through, he guessed that they were on the mainland of the Hong Kong Crown Colony close to the Chinese border. He smiled grimly. It was typical of CYPHER. They wanted him dead, out of the way, but they would let the Chinese Communists take the blame. They had undoubtedly identified him as Henry Arnaud, his disguise was much too good to be penetrated, and they realized that a man like Arnaud would be missed. Let the Chinese take the blame or credit.

But no one would kill Henry Arnaud.

Henry Arnaud would, in moments, cease to exist again.

His mind and his muscles concentrated, he slipped easily out of his bonds. Soundless, he rose from the dark interior of the truck and moved forward. The dozing guard never saw nor heard the faintest thing. One instant the guard was crouched at the tailgate, the next he was sprawled unconscious in the road as the truck swiftly drove on. In the rear of the truck there was a low, chilling

laugh, and Henry Arnaud was no longer in the truck. In place of the gaunt-faced financier, The Shadow stood in his black robes in the dark interior of the moving vehicle. Seconds after that, had there been anyone to see, a great black-winged shape appeared for an instant in the night behind the truck as The Shadow leaped down and the truck vanished into the night still driving at full speed.

The eerie laugh of The Shadow filled the dark night behind the disappearing truck. Someone would have much to explain. The black-cloaked Avenger turned and faded into the night of the countryside.

Years after, the villagers of the rural land told tales of seeing a great black shape that glided through the night to the south and west. Some spoke of seeing this eerie figure cross their rice paddies. Others told of the shadowy shape, ten feet tall, that skirted their villages and disappeared toward the great city of Hong Kong. One recalled with eager terror the black giant, fifteen feet tall, that flew across his house and left a wild laugh behind. Still others told of the twenty foot black bird that swept them from the road. A learned man of a larger village recounted the horror of the moment when the giant black demon had descended upon him in his precious truck and taken it from him. The truck was later mysteriously found less than a half a mile from the village and with, miracle of miracles, a great sum of money in English pounds on the seat. Truly, the learned man said, his ancestors had come to bring fortune upon him. They had tested him with this giant black-winged demon and he had been found worthy. The importance of the learned man rose high in his village, even to ten miles around.

The Shadow reached Hong Kong early in the morning after stealing the truck from the old man who had fled at the first sight of him. He moved unseen through the empty morning streets. When he reached the hotel he glided in a side entrance from the alley and climbed the stairs to the floor of his suite. Margo was waiting as The Shadow came soundlessly into the room. The disguised agent was worried, pacing the floor, until the black

figure of her Chief came in and she closed the door behind him.

"There is a truck in the alley, Margo. Arrange with our people here to return it to the village of Lo Nang with fifty pounds on the seat," the Avenger said. "Then return at once, we have much to do."

The disguised Margo left to arrange for the return of the truck. When she returned, The Shadow told her all that had happened. The ominous black-shrouded figure of the Avenger paced the floor of the quiet morning room as the sun came up over the great island city, and the noise of millions of people began to fill the streets.

"We have less than two days, Margo," The Shadow said grimly. "I now know what the X-2 is, and most of the people in that room. What I do not know is where the final meeting will take place. I could locate the island where we were shown the weapon, but that would take too long, and I do not think for a moment that the next meeting will be in the same place. They are much too careful for that, especially since Arnaud was found there."

"But won't they assume that Arnaud is dead?" Margo said, as she had begun now to remove her disguise.

"Perhaps, but they will move anyway, Margo," The Shadow intoned as he paced the room like a great bird of prey. "And there is not time. I must learn of the meeting before tomorrow, and I must be there. That weapon cannot fall into the hands of such men as those who will bid for it."

"But how?" Margo said.

"There is only one way. I must take the place of one of the men in that room, and attend the final meeting in his stead," The Shadow said.

"But there is so little time to create a safe disguise!"

"That must be risked!"

"What will I do?" Margo said immediately.

The Shadow shook his head, his fiery eyes ablaze. "You can do nothing more, Margo. This The Shadow must do alone. There is no time to plan. You will return to New York and wait there with Burbank and Stanley."

I will contact you when I know where the final meeting is to be held."

Margo said no more, she only stood there and watched her black-garbed Chief pace the room. She had never seen his eyes so aflame. She had never seen him so grim.

"This is a monstrous evil, Margo. The machine itself, and, worse, the cold evil of CYPHER!"

"You will stop them," Margo said softly.

"Yes," The Shadow said. "I will stop them!"

Moments later Margo stood alone in the hotel suite. The sun was bright outside the window over the teeming city of Hong Kong, and The Shadow had gone.

The Hungarian had a thick, scarred face. In his room he packed quickly, threw the white plastic button into the waste basket. His scars came from many years in the underground of his country, years in Spain during the Civil War. He packed now with the experience of all those years of quick flight. Speed was of the essence if his unit within the Hungarian Party were to get the X-2 before their Russian Comrades—or if his section of the Party were to get it before their opponents in Hungary and so rule the country, and, eventually, the world!

In his haste he did not notice the faint stirring of air as if a door had quickly opened and closed. He continued to pack, laying his ugly pistol on the top of his clothes—he had diplomatic rank as a Deputy Commissar of External Affairs, his luggage was immune to search. He turned to make sure he had everything before closing his bag, and froze.

A giant shadow seemed to face him from the darkest corner of his room. His room was dim with the shades drawn against the morning sun, and the great shadow loomed before him. He saw two burning eyes and a hawk nose beneath the broad brim of a slouch hat. A red stone glowed on the long finger of the shadow that pointed now at him.

"Eero Kuhni, why do you hurry?" a voice said in Hungarian.

Kuhni blinked. "Who are you? You speak Hungarian?"

"I speak all languages! The X-2 will not be yours!"

"What do you know of . . ."

The eerie laugh of The Shadow shattered the room.

"I know all things, Eero Kuhni! I know the evil that lurks in the hearts of men!" The Shadow intoned.

The Hungarian whirled, dove for his pistol. He reached it, picked it up, half turned, and the leaping form of The Shadow seemed to envelop him. The pistol skidded away across the room. The Hungarian lay on the floor unconscious. The Shadow bent over him. The Shadow glided to the telephone.

"Margo? There is an unconscious man in Room 412, arrange for his secret removal. He must not be found for three days!"

The Shadow hung up, and turned to look down at the man. Then he bent over his fiery ring.

"Burbank? Report full data on Eero Kuhni, Hungarian Deputy Commissar of External Affairs."

The distant voice of Burbank began to talk in his crisp, solemn tones. The Shadow listened. Ten minutes later, the entire life history of Eero Kuhni implanted indelibly in his mind. The Shadow walked to the man and began to remove his clothes.

Fifteen minutes later Eero Kuhni, Deputy Commissar for External Affairs of the Hungarian Peoples Republic, picked up his airline tickets at the hotel desk and hurried out to a waiting taxi. A tall, thin man—the Cypher Section Director One in disguise in the lobby—smiled as he saw the Hungarian hurry pass, and checked the name of Eero Kuhni off his list. Later, he reported that the Hungarian had been one of the delegates who was in a particular hurry. CYPHER was pleased.

The jet from Istanbul touched down at the Budapest airport early in the evening. There was a long, black official car to meet Eero Kuhni, as befitted his rank. The Hungarian with the thick, scarred face strode to the car and got in. He nodded curtly to the man who was waiting in the car.

"One more day, Bela," Kuhni said, The Shadow recognizing the man at once—Bela Nagy, his Chief and close friend of many years.

"Was it worthwhile, Eero?" Bela Nagy said. The big Hungarian was more than Commissar of External Affairs, he was also chief of the dissident anti-Russian faction within the Hungarian Party.

"More than worthwhile. The weapon will give us all we want!"

"Then we must have it," Nagy said.

"That may not be easy," the false Eero Kuhni said, while The Shadow, hidden behind the disguise, watched all around to see if anyone were following.

"Tell me," Nagy said.

The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, told the details of the meeting with CYPHER. Nagy listened closely, his eyes narrowing and his mouth opening as he heard of the power of X-2. The Commissar literally licked his lips from time to time. But when Kuhni got to the details of the bid, Nagy swore softly.

"Sealed bids! That means we must decide how much the others will bid. That American can bid high."

"So can our Soviet friends, and the Mafia man," The Shadow said as Kuhni. "We must bid all we can, and hope. And we must decide tonight, Bela."

Nagy nodded as the car sped in through Budapest, the broad Danube shining in the moonlight. "Yes. There is little time. How will you be contacted?"

"I don't know, but I will be contacted probably later this very night."

"It gives us little time to work."

"Perhaps we can hope for a license—certainly if the American or the Mafia win the bid. They work for money."

"Yes. Our Soviet friends would keep it, but the American will sell anything for enough money."

The Shadow, as Kuhni, laughed. "The Soviet wishes to rule the world, the American businessmen only wish to own the world."

"Save that for a Party meeting, my friend," Nagy said. "We must be practical. If we have that weapon, we will both rule our part of the world and own it. I will contact the other members of our unit at once. You better wait in your office."

"Of course," The Shadow said, smiling inside. It would lessen any danger of a mistake in his disguise.

They reached the official building just then, and Nagy let him out before driving off to consult with the members of the dissident unit. The Shadow looked around the deserted streets of the great old city that had so recently again tasted blood. Few people were near the official buildings, this was still a country in the grip of fear. He turned and went into the building where the guards saluted him. He climbed the stairs to his own office. In the office, he sat down to wait. He had been, in a way, lucky. Eero Kuhni was a widower with no children and no known family. No one would expect him in Budapest. He waited two hours before anything happened. Then his telephone rang.

"Commissar Kuhni?"

"Yes."

"You will come to the office of Commissar Putni at two o'clock this morning."

The voice clicked off. The Shadow, alone in the silent office, felt cold. Had his disguise been penetrated? He quickly went through his filelike mind and remembered Commissar Putni—the Deputy Commissar for Internal Security! In short, the Secret Police. Why would the Secret Police want to see Kuhni at two o'clock in the morning? Somehow, he must have made an error. But how, and who had noticed? Bela Nagy? No, his data told him that Putni was probably not a member of Nagy's group within the party but an opponent. Then Kuhni was wanted by an enemy! It could be some prior matter, or his disguise could have been broken. He was still considering how to handle this, when he heard a man approaching. He looked at his watch. It was just after one o'clock in the morning. He smiled as Bela Nagy entered the office.

"So, I have our bid, Eero," Nagy said, and slumped into a chair. "It will take all the money we can raise or steal, but we must have that X-2. Here it is, sealed and ready to transmit."

The Shadow took the envelope. "If it is not enough?"

"Then you must try to get a license for it. You are so authorized by the committee. This envelope carries

your authorization, and the top figure for a nonexclusive license."

The Shadow took the second envelope and nodded. "Now I will wait for my contact. In two days from now we should know, Bela."

The eyes of the Commissar shined eagerly. "It is a very high bid, but if we get it, money will be no object! We will rule Hungary completely, perhaps all the Marxist world!"

"Yes," The Shadow said.

Nagy nodded, and got up. He started to speak, stopped, and left. The Shadow watched him go. His eyes burned with the fire of The Shadow beneath his disguise. Bela Nagy would not have the X-2! No one would have it if The Shadow got there first, and he would. But now he had a problem—he had less than an hour to wait for the contact before he had to appear in the office of Commissar Putni. And it would be The Shadow who appeared in the office of the Secret Police Commissar.

The hour passed. There was no contact. Moments later, The Shadow glided from the office of Eero Kuhni and moved along the silent halls and up the stairs to the office of Commissar Putni.

Putni worked alone in his office. He glanced at the clock on the wall and saw that it was only minutes until two o'clock. He stood, opened a locked drawer in his desk—a secret drawer and then he looked out into the hall. He saw nothing, and, satisfied, he went back into his office. He sat down and waited. He had not seen the shadowy black figure in the silent corridor. He did not now see the fiery eyes watching him, or hear the faint sound of a heavy black cape brushing the walls outside his office.

But The Shadow had seen him, and the Avenger glided into the darkness of the corridor in the silent building of the Hungarian Government, and emerged as Eero Kuhni again. He was no longer afraid of Commissar Putni. He had seen the Commissar, and he knew the purpose of the summons. Commissar Putni, Deputy Commissar of Internal Security of the Hungarian Peoples Re-

public had another identity familiar to The Shadow—the man was the big, burly Group Leader 15 of CYPHER! And this meeting was the contact for the final bids on the X-2.

The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, stepped briskly along the corridor and knocked on the door of Commissar Putni.

15

“COME IN!”

The Shadow, in the guise of the scar-faced Eero Kuhni, stepped into the office and pretended he had no idea he was facing anyone other than Deputy Commissar Putni. The Commissar was still a big, burly man even in the simple uniform of the Hungarian Secret Police. Now he waved the supposed Eero Kuhni to a seat. The Shadow sat. Putni continued to work, or pretend to work, in the manner of policemen the world over who believe that this makes the men in front of them nervous. The Shadow was not nervous, and he did not make Eero Kuhni seem nervous. He casually took out a long, Russian-made cigarette of the type Kuhni smoked, lighted it, and blew a stream of smoke into the office.

“You do not wonder why I called you here, Comrade?” Commissar Putni asked, looked up at the supposed Eero Kuhni.

“No, I do not wonder, Comrade Commissar. I have nothing to hide, the Secret Police have no reason to want me.”

“But I sent for you at a strange hour.”

“The Secret Police would have sent more men, and they would have brought me, not sent for me,” The Shadow said.

“Then why did I ask you here?” Putni said softly.

“That will probably become clear in time,” The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, said drily.

“So it will,” Putni said. The Commissar leaned forward. He stared straight at the disguised Shadow. “First, let me tell you, Comrade Kuhni, that I am aware of a number

of things that the Secret Police would think gave them reason to want you. Yes, a number of things."

"Be specific, Comrade," the false Kuhni said. "So that I can be specific when I prove you a liar."

"The recent trip to Hong Kong," Putni said quietly. "It was not on official business, as stated. At least, only partly, eh?"

"And what do you think was the other part?"

"A meeting. Shall we mention—X-2?" Putni said.

The Shadow, as Kuhni, stared at the big Commissar and CYPHER Group Leader. This, then, was the revelation. Putni was making the contact. The question was, how quickly should he accept the contact. Would the real Eero Kuhni be cautious? The Shadow decided that Kuhni would indeed be cautious. Very cautious. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not understand, Comrade Commissar. What is X-2?"

Putni nodded. "Exemplary, Commissar Kuhni, but not needed, I assure you. You must realize that if I know about X-2, I am not what I seem."

"Then what are you, Comrade? I have always thought of you as exactly what you seem—a secret policeman."

Putni smiled. "You have always been careful, Eero, but it is no longer necessary. Will this tell you who I am?"

Putni took a shirt from the secret drawer and unfolded it before the eyes of the supposed Kuhni. It was a black shirt with the circle of CYPHER on the breast. The Shadow, as Kuhni, looked at it, and then he nodded. The shirt would have been enough evidence to have had Putni shot instantly. The big man had made the first move of risk. Now Kuhni could speak out.

"Yes, that tells me. May I ask who I speak to?"

"Group Leader Fifteen. I am your contact."

"I guessed as much by now," The Shadow said drily.

"You have the bid?"

"I have."

"Good, keep it safe, there will be only the one bid. Are you ready to attend the final meeting?"

"Of course, why do you think I am here?" the supposed Kuhni said.

Putni nodded. "Good. Now, here is your new badge, and your card."

The Shadow took the badge and looked at it. It was, again, a plastic lapel button, but red this time. Its legend said simply: *International Trade Fair, Los Angeles, April 29, 1966*. The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, raised an eyebrow. He looked at Putni with a certain surprise.

"Los Angeles? In the United States? That is not an easy city for we of the East to reach, Commissar. Or do you prefer to be called Group Leader?"

"Either will do. Commissar, perhaps, the walls have ears even here," Putni said, and leaned back. "Do not worry about the city. It was chosen for good reason. You will have no problems, it has all been arranged. You will go to the United States as a member of the Hungarian Trade Delegation to the Fair. Here is your passport and your visa."

The Shadow took the documents. "You are efficient in CYPHER."

"We try to be. You will note that your passport is the usual diplomatic passport, you will have no problems. You will fly to London, and then over the North Pole directly to Los Angeles, that is part of the visa. The meeting will be in the evening. You will be contacted there at the Ambassador Hotel. Your room has been reserved."

"Good," The Shadow said.

"Now, I think we had best end this meeting. My superiors might decide to be suspicious."

"Of course," The Shadow said. He stood up to go. Putni smiled.

"You have forgotten your card of admittance, Comrade. It is the most important of your documents. It is, of course, keyed to . . .

Putni stopped, stared. The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, had picked up the card while Putni was talking. As he picked it up, he felt a sensation under his fingers. The faintest of sensations that only the amazing sensitivity

of The Shadow's fingers could have detected. It was a melting sensation, a liquefying, as if some part of the surface of the card had melted under his fingers and turned liquid. Only The Shadow's quick mind and reflexes saved him. He was instantly aware that the melting had to be some kind of signal—a reaction to the fact that the hands that touched the card were not the true hands of Eero Kuhni! Somehow the card was treated to be held only by Kuhni. In a flash, he realized that Putni had never actually touched the card! No, the card was keyed to the peculiar body chemistry of Eero Kuhni, and The Shadow was not the real Eero Kuhni. The Shadow understood this within the fraction of a split second, while Putni was still talking, and when Putni stopped, when the CYPHER Group Leader saw the card, The Shadow was ready.

Putni stopped speaking, looked at the card where a small area beneath the fingers of the man he thought was Eero Kuhni had turned a bright purple, and clutched for his pistol. He raised the pistol, and was struck instantly across the throat by the edge of The Shadow's hand. Putni went over backward, choking, but the CYPHER Group Leader was a big man and full of fight. He went over, gasping, but came up onto his knees still holding the pistol. He held the pistol in both hands and swung it toward The Shadow in the disguise of Kuhni. Without his black cloak, slouch hat, and fire opal girasol ring, The Shadow did not have his power to cloud men's minds, he had to rely on all his other skills. It was enough. When the big CYPHER Group Leader came up on his knees, The Shadow caught him under the chin with a single blow of his right foot. The big Group Leader's head snapped back with a sharp crack, and he slumped in a heap on the floor. His unfired pistol bounced harmlessly across the floor of the office. The Shadow picked up the pistol and walked to the fallen man. Putni, or whatever his real name was, was dead.

The Shadow, still disguised as Eero Kuhni, stood over the dead CYPHER Group Leader and felt nothing at all. The man was dead, he had been a member of an evil organization, that was all there was to remember.

Now The Shadow had work to do. Swiftly, carefully, he searched the entire office. There was nothing connected to CYPHER except in the secret hidden drawer in the desk. There, in the secret drawer, he found the official seal of CYPHER, memorandum from various parts of the CYPHER empire, secret inks, the uniform of the dead Group Leader, and lists of all important Hungarian officials of every political stance. There was nothing else. The Shadow considered. He would like to take the CYPHER seal, the memoranda, and the uniform—but he could not take anything. He could not hide the body of a Deputy Commissar in his own office in the Hungarian capital. Putni would be missed too soon. And, he was certain, CYPHER would miss their chief man in Budapest even quicker. No, he could not hide the body, and he could not take anything that might give CYPHER the suspicion that someone outside the Hungarian Government had killed Putni. CYPHER must believe that Putni had made his contact with Eero Kuhni, and had been killed later by some normal accident of the work of CYPHER.

There was only one way to cover his tracks now.

The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, turned and walked to the door. He went along the hall to an office marked as that of the Commissar of Internal Security. He picked the lock and entered. Inside he went to the telephone. He picked up the private line of the Chief of the Secret Police. The phone covered with a handkerchief, he rang the guard room of the State Security Police. A sleepy voice answered. In flawless Hungarian, his voice muffled just enough without sounding muffled, The Shadow barked that a man was searching his office! He snapped the order to investigate, and to arrest the Deputy Commissar if seen. An official order would follow, there was no time to waste now. The policeman on the other end hesitated, but the call was on the correct line—a direct line only between the Police and the Commissar—and the Commissar sounded urgent.

“Yes sir!” the man answered.

Moments later, The Shadow emerged in his full black garb and glided swiftly back to the office of Putni. He

gathered up the dead man and seemed to float through the silent corridor to the office of the Chief Commissar. Inside he laid down the body, and waited. Already voices were coming up the stairs. The Shadow glided to the door, drew out both his automatics. The first policeman came running along the corridor. The Shadow shot him. The police became more wary, moving cautiously from office to office, coming from both directions. Inside the office, The Shadow propped the body of Putni up against the door. Then he fired a volley into the corridor. The police responded now with a withering fire. Bullets ripped into the already dead body of the CYPHER Group Leader and Deputy Commissar. The Shadow fired another fusillade, whirled, floated to the window and out the window. His powerful fingers clung to small crevices in the sheer wall face as he swarmed unseen down the wall in the night like a human fly. At the bottom he looked back up. He heard the sound of a door being broken down, and there was light in the office of the Commissar. His fiery eyes burned with triumph as he looked up in the night. They would assume that Putni had died resisting arrest, had been killed by their shots. They would find the CYPHER material in his office. The Commissar of Internal Security would know that he had not ordered the arrest, or made the telephone call—but he would, in the end, say nothing. Not once it was reported to him that Deputy Commissar Putni had been a secret member of CYPHER, and was dead resisting arrest. The Commissar would probably take the credit. CYPHER might learn the truth in time, but not at once. The mission of The Shadow could proceed. The black-shrouded shape of the Avenger turned and vanished into the night of Budapest.

Moments later, his papers all in order, Eero Kuhni again drove to the airport. Soon he was aboard the jet for Prague, and thence to London.

The jet from Prague touched down in London very early that morning. Eero Kuhni, without a visa for England, remained in the airport waiting for the Polar jet that would leave within the hour. He sat quietly

inside the fence in the area reserved for those transferring but not entering England. He read a Hungarian Communist newspaper, and smoked his favorite Russian-made cigarettes. He ignored his fellow travelers—some of them the same faces The Shadow knew too well from the jet to Hong Kong and the island of CYPHER. He also ignored a stocky attendant who moved through the area sweeping up in the early hours. The man was of average height, with a broken nose that spread thick across his heavy-jawed face. His ears were thickened, and powerful muscles rippled beneath his airport workman's coveralls. He had more the appearance of a boxer than an airport janitor. But he worked silently and well, stopping every now and then to scrub at a particularly difficult patch of dirt on the stone floor. One such spot was directly beside where the disguised Eero Kuhni was seated. The attendant appeared to be having particular trouble with it. He bent low, his battered face set in concentration. No one saw his lips move.

"Message, Chief?"

Eero Kuhni turned the page of the newspaper that was in front of his face.

"Yes, Bombardier. I am too closely noticed to communicate with Burbank. Report that I am going to Los Angeles. I need an exact duplicate of the card I will drop when I leave. Have the coating analyzed, and have Burbank prepare an identical coating that will respond to the touch of anyone but myself."

"Got it, Chief," Bombardier Bill Mace said. The Bombardier was one of The Shadow's most trusted agents in London.

"Have Stanley and Margo meet me at the Los Angeles airport. Margo will bring the duplicated card."

"Right. Need any help?"

"No, you better continue your work, but be ready to pick up the card."

"Piece o' cake, Chief," the Bombardier said, and, the stubborn spot clean at last, moved on across the floor continuing his work.

The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, continued to read his newspaper. He was sure that no one had noticed his

exchange with Bombardier. The other waiting passengers were all asleep or staring into the silent air at the face of their own thoughts. The hour dragged, but finally it came to an end with the hollow announcement of the Polar Jet by a sleepy voice trying to be gay at dawn. The passengers all filed eagerly to the plane, too intent upon reaching comfortable seats, food and drink to notice the Hungarian with the scarred face who dropped a small card to the floor. Nor did they notice the attendant with the broken nose who swept it up moments later. By the time the false Eero Kuhni reached his seat, Bombardier had the card well on its way to analysis for radio transmission of the details to New York.

The giant Polar Jet took off and climbed higher and higher into the morning sky over England. Moments later it was already approaching Scotland on its great circle route to Los Angeles across the frozen wastes of the pole where, far below, polar bears looked up at the strange and distant bird.

Ten hours later the jet touched down in Los Angeles. It was a sunny afternoon of the same day in the Southern California city as the passengers disembarked. A special team of Customs Officials and State Department men were there to check the members of the Trade Missions from other countries, especially from the Iron Curtain nations. The man who checked Eero Kuhni through did so as if he hated to let the supposed Hungarian one inch onto the sacred soil of California. The Shadow smiled but said nothing. He was cleared through, reminded of his rights and limitations by the man from the State Department, and advised to remain inside Los Angeles. He nodded his understanding, and passed out of the airport. At the taxi stand he hailed a cab. The cab that drove up was one of the small, Mercedes diesels. Eero Kuhni got in, and smiled at the woman seated low so as not to be seen.

"You have the card, Margo?"

"Yes, Chief," Margo Lane said. "Stanley and I took a jet fighter out. We just arrived in time."

The Shadow, as Kuhni, looked at the driver. "Is all clear, Stanley?"

Stanley, disguised as a taxi driver, nodded. "No one following, you're expected at the Ambassador. So far we've spotted nothing unusual."

"You will, Stanley," The Shadow said grimly in his own deep, powerful voice. "You are sure you were not noticed?"

"Absolutely," Margo said. "What do you want us to do?"

"Remain close to the hotel. I will wear one of my miniature homing devices, the long distance type, so that you can keep close but not too close after the contact. I doubt if the meeting will be in the Ambassador anymore than it was in the hotel in Hong Kong. But keep a twenty-four hour watch on the homing receiver just in case."

"Right," Margo said. "Here is the card. A very clever formula Burbank says the London lab reported. It has been set to your body, no one could tell it from the original."

"Good," The Shadow said. "I do not want a repetition of the mistake in Hong Kong. Now, Margo, you better get out unseen. I don't want you noticed at the hotel."

At a stoplight on a crowded street, Margo slipped out of the taxi, and Stanley drove straight on to the Ambassador Hotel where the doorman helped Eero Kuhni out, and a bellman carried his single bag into the crowded lobby.

16

EERO KUHNI, member of the Hungarian Trade Mission, dutifully prepared in his room to attend the first evening session of the International Trade Fair. His companions in the suite, fellow Hungarians of the Trade Mission who had arrived a day earlier, treated him with that mixture of abject courtesy and annoyed fear that was so common in Communist countries. Kuhni was a member of the Government, and therefore dangerous to simple Trade experts, but any member of the Government was also considered a meddling amateur by the trade experts.

They spoke politely to him, deferred to him, but otherwise they let him go his own way in silence. They talked among themselves, all four of them, while The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, showered, shaved and dressed. When he dressed in the old-fashioned suit of the Hungarian, he also made sure that the secret garb and girasol ring of The Shadow were safely and securely concealed within the special pockets he had built into the suit in Hong Kong before he began his perilous journey.

Now, dressed, he left his fellow Hungarians, and went down to the lobby to begin the final stage of his journey—the contact and the destruction of the X-2 and CYPHER. He strolled around the lobby with his special button in clear view. He went to the cocktail bar and stood at the bar for some time, sipping Eero Kuhni's favorite slivovitz and Vichy water. There was no contact, and he returned to the lobby where he sat in an armchair and read the *Los Angeles Times*. It was not long after that when he became conscious of a woman watching him. She was a beautiful woman dressed in the uniform of an airline stewardess. She watched him, and yet did not watch him, and despite the uniform of the stewardess she was the Senior Trooper of CYPHER The Shadow had now seen twice. The instant she was sure that he had seen her, she did not look at him again. Almost at once, the paging system sounded:

“Bus to The Sports Arena will leave from the side entrance. All Trade Fair Delegates without private transportation can take the bus from the side entrance.”

There was a short silence, then: “Delegate Eero Kuhni, please meet your friends at the Sports Arena. Delegate Eero Kuhni, meet your friends at the Sports Arena.”

The import of the combination of circumstances was clear. The woman Senior Trooper had already walked out of the lobby. The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, walked to the side entrance and out into the early evening street of Los Angeles. The bus was there, a line of delegates moving slowly to board the bus. He joined the line and inched toward the bus. When he was six men from reaching the door of the bus, a thin man stepped to him and

asked for a light for his cigarette. The Shadow gave the man a light. A wind seemed to blow the light out.

"Sorry, the doorway would be better."

The Shadow, disguised as Kuhni, stepped out of line and joined the thin man in the doorway. He lighted the cigarette. His match went out. For a moment the doorway was dark and no one was looking. The door inside the doorway opened and The Shadow was pushed gently inside. The door closed. The woman Senior Trooper was there. It was too dark for anyone else to have seen the woman or the fact that they stood in a narrow side corridor. But The Shadow saw, and he saw the pistol in the hand of the thin man. It was the woman Senior Trooper who spoke.

"Eero Kuhni?"

"Yes."

"Your badge is correct. Card?"

He handed her his duplicated card. The woman passed it under a small gauge. She handed it back.

"Very good. Follow me."

He followed the woman along the dark rear corridor behind the facade of the hotel. They came out on the far side of the building and the woman led the way to a waiting car. The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni stepped into the car with the beautiful Senior Trooper. The thin man was gone. The car drove away at once, its driver not once looking around. There had been no blindfold this time, and no drawn curtains. The city of Los Angeles passed outside the windows of the car as if the car, and the people in it, were no more than just ordinary people of the city. A quiet and simple drive through the early evening streets of the lively and gaudy city. But the people in the car were not ordinary, and this was not a quiet and simple drive. It was a drive that could decide the future of the modern world. The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, knew this only too well, and behind his calm exterior he was more alert than he had ever been. He knew that The Shadow could be all that stood between the world and the violent men who wanted the X-2 to rule, if not destroy, the world.

Margo Lane watched the dial of the instrument set in the panel of the back seat of the Rolls-Royce. The Rolls-Royce moved quickly and almost silently through the night under the sure guidance of Stanley. Margo observed the dial that tracked the homing device implanted by The Shadow on his own person. The Rolls-Royce was locked to the beam of the homing device, and was following automatically, but Margo watched anyway—no machine had ever taken the place of human judgment.

"They are going north, Stanley," Margo said.

"On the Ventura Freeway," Stanley said.

"Then the meeting is not to be in Los Angeles. It could be anywhere," Margo said.

"If it's too far out in the country, it will be hard to get close," Stanley said.

"I think we had better alert Harry Vincent to be ready in Los Angeles with a helicopter," Margo said. "We may have to move fast when the time comes."

"The Chief can take care of himself," Stanley said.

"It does not hurt to be ready," Margo said.

"No. You're right, of course, Margo," Stanley said.

Margo nodded to herself. The Shadow could handle anything, but CYPHER was also efficient and utterly ruthless. The Shadow, perhaps, had never faced so efficient, single-minded, and powerful an opponent. That the black-shrouded avenger would triumph she had no doubt, but even The Shadow was not immortal, even The Shadow was not proof against death. It would not hurt to be ready to give help if it were needed. She bent forward and picked up the microphone.

"Agent One to Burbank. Contact Harry Vincent in Los Angeles, alert Agent Vincent to stand-by with helicopter, hold direct communication open with myself."

While Burbank in far-off New York answered and agreed, the Rolls-Royce sped on in the darkening night, guided by the homing device somewhere ahead in the car of CYPHER.

The Shadow, in his disguise as Eero Kuhni, sat in silence beside the impassive woman. The beautiful Senior Trooper had spoken no word since the drive had started.

The burly back of the driver in the front seat never moved, nor did he utter a sound. The Shadow was watching where they were going, and considering how he would defeat CYPHER and destroy the X-2.

It was dark when the Ventura Freeway merged into U.S. Highway 101 at the pretty town of Ventura. The sea came to meet the road, and a low moon shined in a long path from the sky across the calm Pacific to the land. Here the coast was warm and peaceful, splashed with the color of a thousand flowers—the red bougainvillea, the magnificent hibiscus, the trumpet vines and roses, the strange bird-of-paradise blooms—lined with palm trees and pines and the green live oak. There were fig trees, avocado trees, and the long rows of orange and lemon trees. It was a beautiful and warm land where people lived as all people should live, but, in a world of violence, did not live.

The Shadow watched the sea move swiftly past as the car drove on to the north and west along the coast. To the right the dry hills of the Santa Ynez loomed in the night. Beyond the Santa Ynez were the inland valleys where the heat was greater and the farms fed a nation. It was a land of many people on the coast, and of many dry and empty canyons among the mountains. The car drove on with its silent passengers, and The Shadow considered how he would defeat CYPHER and the violent merchants of power and death who had come to deal with CYPHER for a weapon that could enslave the Earth. The first importance was to find the X-2, its plans, its detailed principle, and its inventor. After that he would deal with CYPHER.

But now, as the car drove on, he could do nothing but wait. And even as he thought this, the car suddenly turned right away from the shining sea and the low moon toward the dark and looming mountains.

Stanley let the Rolls-Royce follow the homing device with its automatic tracking lock. They passed through Ventura and sped on up the coast. The moon was higher over the sea now. In the back seat, Margo checked her weapons. She wore the slim coveralls in deep black that

would make her almost as invisible in the night as The Shadow himself.

"They've turned off," Stanley said.

"Into the mountains?" Margo asked.

"Yes," and Stanley looked up and to the right toward the dark shapes of the Santa Ynez. "Up there somewhere, in one of those canyons. If they go too deep into some canyon, the mountains could cut off the homing signal."

"Move closer," Margo said.

"It won't be easy, Margo, they're moving fast."

Stanley gunned the motor of the powerful Rolls-Royce and the big car surged forward along the sea. But Highway 101 was crowded, and Stanley could gain little. He maintained his distance, perhaps gained a half a mile, and then reached the spot where the other car had turned off. The Rolls-Royce swung off the highway just past Summerland and headed down a paved side road into Montecito. They drove on through Montecito village—and began to climb. The car far ahead led them off into another secondary road that wound up and around the base of a mountain, heading deeper and deeper into the more desolate parts of the Santa Ynez.

The radio set into the backseat began to make a low sound. A light flashed. Margo switched on the receiver.

"Yes?"

"Burbank reporting. Urgent for Chief."

"Chief unable to accept message now. Report to me." Margo said.

"Our man in Hong Kong reports that truck and driver answering to the Chief's description of the truck that was taking Henry Arnaud to the Communist border have been found! The driver was dead, shot twice. All evidence points to the murder being the work of CYPHER."

"Thank you, Burbank. Stand by for immediate contact. Is Harry Vincent alerted?"

"Agent Vincent is ready in helicopter," Burbank reported.

Margo clicked off the radio set and sat silent in the back seat for a long minute. Stanley watched her in his rear view mirror. The beautiful woman agent of The Shadow let her eyes meet Stanley's eyes in the mirror.

"It means that CYPHER knows that Arnaud is alive.

They know he escaped. They will be expecting him to make another attempt to reach them. They may even have guessed that Arnaud is more than he seems to be, Stanley. They will be waiting for him!"

But Stanley did not answer. The bodyguard-chauffer was manipulating the big car, testing his control, staring down at the dial of the tracking instrument that was following the homing device far ahead. Margo looked down at her dial in the back seat. The dial read zero! The dial showed no reaction at all.

"It's gone, Margo," Stanley said. "The contact is gone. Something has cut us off. We've lost contact!"

"Perhaps the mountains. The beam won't go through a mountain."

Stanley looked all around. They were in a deep canyon surrounded by mountains. The narrow road stretched ahead.

"We've passed a lot of side roads. They must have turned into one of them," Margo said.

"Yes," Stanley said.

"We have to find it! When we come into range we'll find him!"

"Yes," Stanley said. "If we come into range in time."

Margo was silent. She watched the motionless dial. Then she looked out toward the mountains all around. The Shadow was alone now.

The Shadow, as Eero Kuhni, held to the side of the car as it lurched along the narrow dirt road. The lights of the car picked out the rutted road ahead, the deep ravine to the right, the high steep sides of the mountains all around. The road twisted and turned on itself like a snake, skirting the deep ravines, hugging the sides of the dry and sun-baked hills. The Shadow was aware that these hills that surrounded him now would not allow the signal of his homing device to reach Margo and Stanley unless they were close behind him. But he had more important problems on his mind.

The car had come out of its tortuous passage among the hills and ravines, and now climbed up a steep switchback toward a house high on the side of a mountain. It was a monstrous old house, a mansion set far back in

utter isolation on the side of its mountain in the wild country behind the prosperous California coast. It was not disguised from above, there was no need—it was only an old mansion looming grotesque and monstrous in the night. The area was dotted with such mansions, relics of the days of the Robber Barons who loved their splendid isolation after they became rich. Now it was ablaze with light as if the proud owner were giving a splendid party—but it was not an ordinary party. The Shadow knew who the guests would be at this party, and what the prize of the evening was. And he knew that he, and he alone, had to prevent the prize of the X-2 falling into the hands of such guests as the merchants of violence who were gathering in the old mansion on the mountain.

His second problem was what he saw and heard as the car made the last sweeping turn of the switchback and entered the straight road that led to the tall iron gates in the high stone wall that surrounded the mansion. He heard a faint humming in the air, so faint only The Shadow could have heard it. It was a hum of a sound wavelength higher, much higher, than could ever be heard or felt by human ears other than the ears of The Shadow. He knew at once what the sound, the sensation against his Oriental-trained ears, was in the night—an electronic field defense against any devices that could be transmitting messages, or signals, or directional beams! And his homing device could not be deactivated without being destroyed—and he could not destroy it now in the car. It would be detected soon unless he blocked its signal.

What he saw as the car slowed for the tall gates were the shadowy figures all through the dark underbrush surrounding the mansion outside the walls. He could see them clearly with his night vision—uniformed men of CYPHER patrolling the entire area! More than a routine patrol, he was sure of that. The soldiers were observing and patrolling the approaches to the mansion, but they were also observing the walls of the mansion itself—as if they expected some danger, but did not know for sure whether it would come from outside or inside! The Shadow, his disguised face betraying nothing, watched

carefully, and knew at once that CYPHER was, for some reason, alert and ready for some kind of attack or infiltration. The action of the guards at the gate confirmed this.

The car drove up to the gate and was halted by five guards, three with guns who stood back and covered the car while their two companions approached the car. The Shadow produced his badge and his card, and his mind concentrated all the power he had when not in his secret black garb to block the signals from his homing device. He could block it for a time so that their electronic field would not detect it. The guards took his card and badge and subjected them to visual and electronic scrutiny with a small gauge. The badge and cards passed the inspection this time, as The Shadow knew they would. The gates swung open, the guards stood back. The car drove through and into the grounds. A curving gravel drive led up to the door of the house. The tall iron gates closed behind the car.

The car drove on up the drive toward the door of the mansion. On the wide porch, three of the CYPHER leaders in the grey tunics were gathered around a machine that was scanning all arrivals. It was a special X-ray machine. A machine that would penetrate any disguise—even that of The Shadow. He did not hesitate. The car was halfway up the curving drive. That instant it went behind a grove of trees and was momentarily blocked from view from the house. With a swift, unseen move of his right hand, he caught the neck of the female Senior Trooper and squeezed. She slumped unconscious. He leaned forward and chopped the driver across the neck, slid quickly across into the front seat, and brought the car to a halt.

The door opened and he jumped out into the night.

But it was not Eero Kuhni who moved like a phantom across the gravel drive and into the wooded grounds of the mansion—it was the black-cloaked figure of The Shadow.

17

THE SHADOW circled the grounds of the mansion like a dark wraith in the California night. There were guards patrolling everywhere. It would be only a matter of minutes before CYPHER discovered the car in the driveway, and knew that an enemy was on the grounds. He had little time to discover the location of the X-2, and to destroy it and its inventor! He glided soundlessly through the dark mountain trees to the side of the mansion. There was light in most of the rooms. He circled the house in the night, a flickering black shape that merged and blended with the shadows of the night itself, until he found the windows he was seeking—the large ballroom of the mansion where the assembled merchants of violence waited for the results of their sealed bids.

The room through the window, as The Shadow's fiery eyes watched, was a blaze of light, a milling of fifty anxious people all watching the small raised platform at the far end that had once been built to hold the orchestra at the real balls that must have graced this house in bygone times when the world was a more simple place. The men and women of power and of violence looked at their watches from time to time, muttered to each other, paced. For the most part they did not talk to each other, except for the muttered comments of annoyance at the apparent delay, but paced in isolated silence, contemplating their chances, aware that the winner would have the power to destroy the others if he wished to, and the power was as important to these vultures as the act. To be destroyed was bad for them, but to be in the position to be destroyed, to be at the mercy of someone else, was, perhaps, worse. So they did not chat easily with each other, but drank the drinks brought by uniformed waiters in a grim silence broken only by curt words when the waiting became intolerable and even they had to speak to someone.

Suddenly, they all turned to a man, and there was a stir at the door. The small Senior Director with the plastic face came swiftly into the room. He was followed by the tall, thin Section Director One, and the woman Senior Trooper who had been made unconscious by The Shadow. The three of them walked quickly to the raised platform. The grotesque-faced little Section Director stood at the podium and surveyed the assembled bidders. At his window, The Shadow watched with his fiery eyes. The female Senior Trooper stood grim on the platform, and the tall Section Director One seemed uneasy. But at the podium, the macabre-faced little Section Director Six had a gleam in the eyes hidden behind the holes in his plastic mask as if he would be smiling thinly if his face had been able to move. His rigid face turned slowly from one side of the room to the other as if studying every face in the room. Then he nodded. His voice was low and cold. The Shadow, crouched hidden at the window, watched him as he began to speak.

"I must apologize for the delay, ladies and gentlemen, I know how anxious you are to hear the results of the bidding. But before we can begin the final stage of our transaction, we have a small matter of security." He stopped as the room hummed with suddenly alarmed conversation. He held up his hand for silence. "There is no cause for alarm, I assure you. You will recall the man, Arnaud, we unmasked in Hong Kong? Well, it appears that he escaped us after all. I am fairly certain that Arnaud, or one of his associates, is here on the grounds now."

Again the assembled merchants of violence buzzed with alarm. Their power was the power of silence and darkness, and they did not welcome the light on them, or the eyes of unfriendly strangers who learned who and what they were. They began to shout for action, for a quick end to the business so that they could leave as soon as possible. Three of them even started for the door. Guards blocked the exit. The small man with the weird plastic face again held up his hand for silence.

"Please! I absolutely assure you that there is no danger. He cannot escape us. But until we find and destroy him,

I cannot permit anyone to leave, nor can I conclude our business."

A voice shouted. "He escaped you once!"

"Yes!"

"How do we know?"

"We can't be seen here!"

"Please, please!" the small man called out. "He escaped because we let him out of our sight alive—that will not happen this time. That is why you must remain. The grounds are sealed off, no one can get in or out past our men. We know that he is here. But, to be sure, I call Eero Kuhni!"

Silence.

"Eero Kuhni!"

Silence again. Two of the assembled people looked at the faces around them. Guards stood high on a balcony along the walls and scrutinized the people on the floor below. The leader of the guards shook his head. A short, stocky man in the ill-fitting suit of a Russian spoke up.

"He is not here. I know Kuhni, and he is not here."

The rigid-faced Section Director nodded. "As I expected. He entered the grounds, this Eero Kuhni, but he is not here. He knew that the X-ray machine would have penetrated his disguise so he vanished. But he cannot escape the grounds. So, we will now have a small game. One capability of the X-2 was not demonstrated to you in Hong Kong. It is a simple extension of the obvious. Any subject can be influenced to do anything if the machine is correctly programmed. So, as a final demonstration, we will show you how simple it is to rid yourselves of an unwanted enemy—how he will get rid of himself for you. The X-2 has been programmed to induce *suicide*! We will track down this intruder, and the machine will be turned on him! The result, I think, will be most instructive and, perhaps, a little amusing."

The buzz in the room was of laughter now. The group all smiled at each other. Some laughed aloud. There was an air of anticipation. The rigid-faced little man moved his macabre head to show that he, too, was laughing. Outside, the eyes of The Shadow burned brighter

as he watched and listened. There was even less time. The small man with the plastic face held up his hand once more for silence. The room quieted.

"To give you all a better view, I want you to go out onto the front porch. The X-2 prototype is mounted on a jeep out in front. Various other of our guards also have weapons, but they will not use them unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent his escape. I hope that will not happen, I would hate you to miss the fun, eh?"

The voices all shouted, *Yes, Yes*, and there was much laughter. At the window, The Shadow's eyes blazed up. He knew where the X-2 machine was now. Now it was time to act. He let the signal of his homing device beam out again. There was no need now to hide.

His black shape vanished from the window and blended into the darkness of the trees on the silent grounds.

The four black-uniformed guards patrolled along the high south wall. Three of them carried conventional weapons. The fourth carried a deadly beam projector. They patrolled carefully, watching back and front, covering each other. They passed a clump of trees that stood in dark shadow. One of them flashed his strong light into the clump. There was nothing they could see, only the black shapes of the night. They passed on beyond the clump, still watching all sides, cautious and efficient. Suddenly they all froze.

There was a noise in front of them and to the left.

All four leveled their weapons and looked toward where the sound had come from. The two in front were some four steps ahead of the two in back. The two in back never saw the black form that floated from the clump of trees they had passed and seemed to enfold them like a great black amoeba. Silently, they vanished into the clump of trees as if swallowed.

The two in front turned to suggest a plan for advancing toward the sound they had heard. They stared when they did not see their companions. One of them pointed to the clump of trees. Something seemed to be glowing red among the trees. The two CYPHER men advanced cautiously. The black shape seemed to explode at them,

like part of the night itself engulfing them. They collapsed without a sound as The Shadow descended upon them.

The laugh of the Avenger was low in the night.

There were three CYPHER-men guarding the main gate. They were there to guard only the interior, the outside being patrolled by another squad of the black-uniformed troopers. The three on the inside did not see the black-shrouded figure glide up through the night. They did not see the fiery eyes that glowed like points of flame, or the hawk nose beneath the wide slouch hat. The first they knew that something was happening was when each man felt the faint prickling in his brain, the flow that was like a soft touch on their brains. They brushed their eyes and shook their heads. They blinked as the mist seemed to hover over them. A cloud that entered their minds softly, thickly. Then there seemed to be a whispered voice, a voice that commanded them to lay down their weapons and go into the bushes. They laid down their weapons and walked into the bushes. The voice from the mist that clouded their minds whispered to them to lie down and sleep. They lay down and closed their eyes as if in sleep. The black shape of The Shadow moved on.

Near the west wall two CYPHER men fell into a narrow gully and lay at the bottom. They had not seen the gully. They had been walking cautiously ahead, and then there was no ground and they lay deep in the gully unconscious.

Three more CYPHER guards, walking in single file, fell one by one as strong fingers of steel closed on their throats from behind—the last, then the middle, and finally the leader. Each man did not hear the others fall.

There were four CYPHER men who entered a thick tunnel of trees near the east wall. None of them came out. Their bodies lay dead where they had fallen under sudden blows that seemed to strike from the black trees, from a power that came up out of the dark earth itself.

Three others heard a noise near the mansion and closed in with their weapons ready. The man with the

X-2 was in the lead. He saw the figure in the night. He aimed his weapon and blasted a beam at the figure. There was a sudden shot, and the man with the X-2 stood over the body of one of his own men—the man had shot himself! The other two ran forward and had only an instant to see the burning eyes in the night before they were dead from two sudden blows. The man with the X-2 whirled and aimed his weapon. Before he could press the trigger he forgot what he had intended to do. There was a great cloud on his mind. He tried to think but could not. He laid down his weapon at a whispered word that seemed to come from inside his own mind. Then he fell to the ground and slept.

The Shadow's laugh rose chilling in the night.

On the steps on the mansion the crowd milled and waited. The small Section Director with the grotesque plastic face stood apart with his fellow Section Director. The female Senior Trooper was bent over an electronic control board. The two Section Directors stared at the woman and at the board. She turned her head to look at them.

"It's impossible! Now there is no contact along the rear wall! Nothing!" the Senior Trooper cried.

"Ridiculous, Senior Trooper! The men report every half hour!" the tall, thin Section Director One said.

"Or on contact!" the small man with the plastic face said. "Are you sure the board is operating?"

"I'm sure, Section Director," the woman said.

The small man with the plastic face pushed her aside. "Let me try!"

He bent over the board, pressed buttons, turned dials, his hand growing frantic as the silent board mocked him. He spoke harshly into the microphone built into the board—there was no answer. The small man swore, his plastic face shaking with the anger that did not show on the rigid surface but that churned beneath where the scar of his real face still existed.

"Try outside the walls!" the tall, thin Section Director said.

The small man spun a dial, pressed buttons. Finally there was an answer. Post Six outside the wall reported all quiet. Posts One through Five did not answer.

"What about the gate?"

The gate did not answer.

"Send Post Six in through the gate!"

Post Six acknowledged and signed off. The Section Director waited for a report from Post Six when they reached the gate. There was no report. The gate still did not answer. The plastic-faced little man turned to look at the tall, thin man.

"I don't understand it!"

"Careful," the tall, thin man said. "They are beginning to sense something."

"They're watching us," the woman said.

The crowd on the porch of the mansion had grown restless. Many of them were staring toward the little group of CYPHER leaders clustered around the control board. A low murmur had begun. Two of the crowd of bidders stepped toward the group. The small man with the grotesque plastic face faced them.

"A small communications problem, nothing else. You have nothing to worry about. We should be able to get to the bids very . . ."

The weird, chilling laugh seemed to rise up out of the night and flow across all the waiting bidders.

"What the . . . !" the tall, thin Section Director began.

The crowd began to buzz again, looking out from the porch into the darkness beyond the lighted gravel driveway.

"Him!" the plastic-faced leader said. "The man in black!"

"There!" someone shouted.

The Shadow stood in the blaze of light from the house, his great black shape high in the air on the jeep that was mounted with the X-2.

"Kill him!" the plastic-faced CYPHER leader cried. "Kill him!"

But no one responded.

There were no guards. The guards who had been on the jeep lay in the gravel of the driveway. All around

the house, as the cry of "Kill him!" echoed across the night, there was only silence. Nothing moved anywhere in the night except on the brightly lighted porch itself. The cry reverberated, "Kill him!" and faded away into the great silence that filled the darkness, its final echo dying away against the dark and arid mountains.

The Shadow laughed.

The woman Senior Trooper drew her pistol and aimed it. A single shot cracked out and she fell back against the building and pitched forward onto her face.

The automatic in the hand of The Shadow ejected the shell of the bullet that had struck her.

The tall, thin Section Director One dove for the floor of the porch, his pistol out and coming up toward The Shadow. It never came up. The Shadow blazed with both automatics and the tall, thin man crumpled in a heap, blood spreading across the grey tunic of a CYPHER Section Director.

The gathered merchants of violence and slavery began to mill, shout, run toward the towering black apparition of The Shadow where he stood on the jeep, his chilling laugh reverberating far across the silent and deserted hills beyond the high walls of the mansion.

The Shadow pulled the cover off the X-2, and turned it toward the angry bidders who rushed toward him.

They would now never know who made the high bid.

The Shadow directed the beam of the diabolical weapon on them.

18

THE SHADOW never forgot the scene that he now looked at all across the porch and the gravel driveway of the mansion high in the hills of the Santa Ynez. He had seen many scenes of horror, but this was to remain indelibly etched in his mind. But he did not relent, he did not cease to direct the beam of the horrible machine—he could not risk the X-2 ever reaching any of these creatures.

As the beam of the machine struck them, traversed

slowly across them set at its widest beam angle, they began to react. The Shadow beamed them, and for an instant they continued to run toward him, and then it began. It was, in gigantic numbers, the scenes he had been shown in the *presentation* movie at Hong Kong.

They stopped.

Their eyes went blank, vacant.

Then their eyes became bright, maniacal.

From their pockets, from the ground around the jeep where the CYPHER soldiers lay, from the dead Senior Trooper and the tall, thin Section Director One, they took weapons. Some had knives hidden in their clothes, some had guns, many had the poison capsules such people carry because they know what would happen to them in the hands of their enemies—the same they would do to their enemies. As the beam touched them, concentrated upon them, they found weapons of death.

The screams and groans filled the air.

They took the poison.

They shot themselves.

They stabbed themselves and the blood flowed.

The ground became littered with the bodies, the pools of blood, and the air filled with the groans and screams of the dying.

Those that were not touched by the beam of the X-2 began to run in panic. All across the dark grounds of the mansion they ran with the deadly beam of the X-2 pursuing them, programmed to make them kill themselves without knowledge of why or how they would die. The Shadow swung the beam of the macabre weapon right and left from the top of the jeep. He sent the fingers of the beam probing through the night. Those that were not touched, those that did not die or attempt to die at their own hand, had no more thought of The Shadow. They ran in the last extremity of the carrion they were—for their own lives.

The small, grotesque-faced Section Director did not run. He had not tried to shoot The Shadow, and he did not flee in panic. He stood for a moment watching, looking to be sure of what had happened and was happening. The beam touched him but nothing happened. He did

not go blank, his eyes did not turn into the eyes of a fanatic. He did not try to kill himself.

The Shadow knew that whatever the defense against the beam was, the macabre little CYPHER leader had used it for himself. Probably they had all used it, the men of CYPHER, and the beam of the X-2 would not harm them. But they were not proof against bullets. The Shadow drew his automatics again.

The small Cypher leader turned and vanished into the mansion.

The Shadow leaped down from the jeep and floated across the gravel of the driveway. He picked his way among the dead and dying, feeling no pity for these men who were, in the end, more monsters than men—men who bid for the weapons of horror, men who lived on the blood and hopes and death of other men. He reached up onto the porch and into the mansion. The grotesque Section Director was far ahead down a long side hallway. The Shadow moved unseen and wraithlike after him. His automatics were in his hand, but he did not fire. He did not want the small man dead, not yet. He had ended the bidding, destroyed the X-2 machine, and left the merchants of death lying in their own blood—but his job was not yet ended.

He watched as the rigid face of the CYPHER leader turned and looked carefully behind. The Shadow merged instantly with the shadows of the hallway. The grotesque Section Director was satisfied that he was not being followed. Suddenly, he stepped to the wall at the end of the hall and vanished.

The cave was deep inside the mountain. A white-haired old man worked over a desk. The old man was writing. From time to time the old man consulted some notes, and then wrote again. All around him in the cave there were long benches, work benches, with glassware and electronic apparatus. There were sleeping quarters in the cave also. The old man seemed oblivious to all but his work. He did not move when the plastic-faced section director suddenly appeared in the cave. He did not turn

or look up. The small CYPHER leader stood behind him.

"Morgan."

The old man held up a hand, wrote, did not turn.

"Dr. Morgan! I speak to you!"

"A moment, only a moment. I am on to something! A new form of will-ray. The X-3 might be ready. Ah, it is magnificent. A ray that will not only sap the will, render the subject ready for any command, but will make him a permanent tool—a human robot. But not different, not strange in any way—absolutely normal. And yet he will become subject to the control will *at any time!*" the white-haired old man smiled. "Think of it! A subject permanently conditioned to do precisely what he is instructed, no need to use the X-3 more than once. A scientific marvel, I tell you."

"Very good, Dr. Morgan. You are a genius. But now we must leave here," the grotesque Section Director said.

The old man stopped writing, blinked up. "I am to go now to my new laboratory?"

"No, that is over. You must build more X-2's in our lab in Peru. We must go at once to Peru. Come."

"But you promised me that I would have a new laboratory. You said that someone would buy the X-2 and give me a real laboratory!"

"Soon, Morgan but not now. There has been a change of plan."

"You promised! I am tired of this cave! I am tired of you and your Peru! I am a scientist, not a pawn!"

"You are *our* scientist, Morgan! Remember that. Now come with me."

"My work! My experiments!"

"Leave them! I said come now!"

"Leave my notes, too? Leave the principle of the X-2 and the notes for the X-3?" the old man said.

"Of course not, you fool! Bring them, but hurry! There is not much time!"

The old man shrugged and began to gather his papers. The rigid-faced CYPHER leader waited impatiently. The old man took his time, and neither the old man nor the Cypher leader saw the black wraith that glided through

the dark areas of the cave. They did not see the burning eyes that were fixed on them, or that watched the old man gather his papers. They were unaware of anything until the voice broke the deep silence of the cave far down inside the mountain beneath the mansion.

"There is no time, *Georgi!*"

The man with the plastic face turned sharply. He held a pistol. His eyes behind the mask blinked as he saw the giant black figure of The Shadow, felt the power of the burning eyes. He did not fire. He stared. The old man, Dr. Morgan, stood with his mouth open, his case of papers filled and in his hands. It was the CYPHER leader, Georgi, who spoke.

"You! Who are you? What power do you have that we cannot escape you!"

"I am called The Shadow, Georgi. I destroy all evil. I will destroy you."

"How do you know my name?"

The old man whined. "Who is this? What does he want?"

"How do you know my name?" the small man said again, and the eyes behind the mask blazed. "Arnaud! You are Henry Arnaud! Yes, of course, you heard my name used. Now I see! You are Arnaud, and Lamont Cranston, too! One and the same! Ah, now I have your secret. Now . . ."

The laugh of The Shadow mocked the men in the silent cave. His eyes blazed again. His voice was cold when he spoke.

"You have my secret, Georgi, but I have you!"

The rigid face moved as if the real face behind it laughed.

"You have me? I have you, Shadow. Yes, I have the pistol! You will not move!"

Again The Shadow laughed. "What good, Georgi, is a pistol that will not fire?"

"You think . . . So, I will show you!"

The grotesque little Cypher leader pointed the pistol and tried to fire. The eyes of The Shadow burned brighter. The old man watched. There was no shot.

"I will kill you!" the small man shouted.

His finger would not pull the trigger.

"Shoot!" the old man shouted, clutching his case of notes and plans to his old breast.

The small man strained, stared at The Shadow.

The Shadow laughed.

The small man brushed at the rigid mask of his face. He stepped back. There was a faint sound. A great cloud of white smoke filled the cave between The Shadow and the two men he faced. A dense cloud, released by some control activated by the foot of the small man. The Shadow bounded forward through the smoke. There could be no danger, the small man and Morgan had worn no masks. The Shadow burst through the smoke and emerged in a space where they had stood. They were gone.

The Shadow, his eyes flaming, searched the wall of the cave beyond the smoke. His powerful vision saw the faint crack in the solid stone. He concentrated all the power of his mind. There was a faint whirring sound and the cave wall opened revealing a cleverly camouflaged secret door. The Shadow moved through the door. A flight of steps led upward. The Shadow bounded up. The steps wound up and up. There was a short flat space before the next section of stairs. The Shadow stopped, his mind sensing some danger. He concentrated and with a sharp click two rows of razor-sharp knives sprung from the walls and met in the center of the passage.

With a grim smile on his hawk face, The Shadow dropped to the floor of the passage and crawled beneath the knives. On his feet again he went soundlessly up the stairs of the next flight. He easily evaded two more traps, and emerged at last out into the night. He stood on the summit of the mountain behind the mansion. The moon was high now, and all around in the night the silent peaks stretched away. Below there was still light all through the mansion, and the faint and distant groans of the still living far below.

On the summit of the mountain there was only silence.

The Shadow's eyes pierced the dark.

He saw, a hundred yards ahead, a shoulder of the mountain. Behind the shoulder there was a sound. The sound of two men running. The Shadow bounded away through the dark like a great bird with wide black wings.

He seemed to fly around the shoulder of the mountain. Ahead the two men had stopped running.

They stood beside a helicopter.

Already the engine of the helicopter had started. The two fleeing men were in the helicopter. The Shadow raced toward them with his black cape streaming out in the dark. His automatics were out and ready. The helicopter took off, banked, whirled high in the night above the mountain. The Shadow fired a volley, but the machine was too far. High above, The Shadow saw the grotesque face of the small man leaning down to look back at him. The Cypher leader waved in final derision.

The Shadow stood on the ground and gazed upward with his burning eyes. His mind reached out, the power of his mind that flowed out like a stream, a river of power that reached into the escaping helicopter. The engine of the helicopter coughed, sputtered, and went dead in the air.

For a long moment the helicopter hung there silent in the black sky. The rigid plastic face looked down at The Shadow on the mountain below.

Then the helicopter, its electrical system silenced by the power of The Shadow's mind, plunged down and down like a stone and flamed to destruction as it struck the mountain and rolled over and over down into the rocky valley.

The laugh rang through the dark hills.

Fifteen minutes later The Shadow stood beside the smashed helicopter, the last trace of the secret of the X-2 destroyed. Then he turned and climbed back up the mountain, went back down to the mansion, and destroyed all the models of the diabolical weapon.

A half an hour later another helicopter swooped down on the grounds of the mansion. The Shadow watched it come down. Margo stepped out and ran to the Avenger.

"We located your homing signal only a half an hour ago," the woman agent said.

"Just in time, Margo."

The beautiful woman looked around. She saw the bodies that littered the grounds. She looked at her chief.

"Did you get the principle of the X-2?"

"Yes, Margo. The principle, the models, and the man who invented them. They are all destroyed."

"All? The principle? But we could give it to . . ."

"To no one, Margo! The X-2 can go to no one on this Earth, not yet, perhaps not ever. No man is ready for such a weapon. No country. No power."

Margo again looked around.

"Are they all dead?"

"Dead or running," The Shadow said. "We will alert the FBI to come and finish the job. I think they will not want the world to know of this."

The Shadows chilling laugh was grim now, cold, as it carried across the mountains. He turned away and glided silently to the helicopter where Harry Vincent waited at the controls. Margo got into the machine and it took off and vanished into the night.

Behind it, the mansion lay bright as day and as silent as a tomb.

A week later, in the office of Commissioner Weston of the New York Police, Inspector Parker of the FBI explained the solution of the case to Lamont Cranston, Margo, Weston and Hawkins of Interpol.

"It was an anonymous tip," Parker explained. "When we got to that mansion the place looked like a battleground. There were bodies everywhere. These soldiers in the black uniforms, and all the foreign civilians. They told a story I can't even repeat to you people, its all top secret now. Let's just say that all those crimes, assassinations, murders were caused by one outfit that calls itself CYPHER. They used some experimental machine. We found broken parts of some odd-looking weapon, but nothing else. True or not true, we'll never really know."

"A ray that causes men to kill total strangers and with no knowledge of what they have done?" Commissioner Weston said. "Do you believe it Parker?"

The FBI man looked at Weston, and then at the rest of them in the room. "I don't know, Chief Weston. All I do know is that all those bodies in the driveway of the mansion had killed themselves! It was mass suicide, and they said it was the machine that made them do

it. The few survivors said that it was suicide. They escaped by running from the machine before it touched them. We found them huddled like frightened rabbits all over that mountain. They whimpered about the X-2."

The grim FBI man looked at them all. Cranston, his hooded eyes impassive now, spoke quietly to Inspector Parker.

"But you found no real clues. Only these survivors? You have no way of knowing if there really was such a machine?"

Parker watched Cranston. "Let's put it this way, Cranston. Maybe there was an X-2, and maybe not. Something made all those people kill themselves, something scared the others practically insane. Officially it is mass hysteria. The file is closed. No one will ever see that file. In fact, it may be destroyed. The Director is considering it now with the President."

In the silence the Interpol man, Hawkins, rubbed his chin and stared off into the empty space of Weston's elegant office. The Interpol man seemed to be thinking of something he did not quite want to mention. But, at last, Hawkins spoke.

"If there was such a machine, and if it did make all those people kill themselves, Inspector, who operated it? I mean," and Hawkins looked at them all, "someone had to operate it."

Parker stared at the floor. Then he seemed to find some lint on his suit to brush away. Finally he shrugged.

"The survivors were half insane, maybe completely insane. Who knows, Hawkins? They talked about a monster, a black-cloaked demon who laughed. They were incoherent. They seemed to think this black demon, this *shadow*, had operated the X-2. Personally, I think they fought among themselves and turned it on each other."

"A laugh?" Hawkins said. "A shadow?"

Margo smiled. "After all, the mountains are full of shadows."

The End

THE MAD MEN



Strange, senseless, horrible murders—no profit motive, no chain of circumstances, no organized plan until suddenly:

THE SHADOW KNOWS—

It is the men of CYPHER.

Quickly then, Interpol, the F.B.I., but to no avail.

Then—Margo Lane captured, Lamont Cranston tortured, investigators dead.

Now the black cloak moves through the night, the demoniacal laugh fills men with fear; **THE SHADOW ACTS.**

All is over. **THE SHADOW** has come and gone. Where?

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